



فَلَمْ يَرْجِعْهُمْ حَفْظُهُمْ  
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# The Eucharist of the Risen Lord

விழின்காயக்காா தங்காமறைப்புச்சூத்தாய்  
மணிர் விழிவுக்கர் பட்காரர் காச்சியன்சூ  
தங்குட பகலிரின்சிவராகாயாமாவிளை  
நினுவிழிப்பிடிக்குங்கமெ நதி ஶரளாதாலை,  
அவுடை நியமித்துவாதாதைவே நிலூங்கையமாய்  
அரோவாக்கதாலப்பு தங்கிலின்சி வசித்து  
அதிகாங்காதவுமாகாங்காயை கதவுமாக்குா

## THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

The Eucharist is the very heart of the Christian life. It is the specifically Christian action. Like the Church itself, of which it is the summary and sign, it is a profound mystery. It uses the gestures and language of humanity, but cannot be contained in purely human categories. Any study of the Eucharist must therefore respect not only the theology of the Eucharist but also the faith, which gives its fullest meaning to that theology. We must approach our study of this great mystery with humility and reverence. Like the other sacraments, the Eucharist is a sacrament of faith. It is celebrated within the context of faith. The Eucharist is not a magical rite. It requires the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Without this intervention, there would be only human ritual.

## **The Church, Sacrament of Christ**

A clear sacramental structure can be detected in the Church, who is "like a sacrament, that is, a sign and a means of intimate union with God (Vatican II; LG 1; cf.9). The strength of the Father's saving love, incarnate in Christ, is rendered now present in the Church. Consequently, this sacramental nature of the Church flows necessarily from the sacramental structure of Christ. Just as Christ is the sacrament of

the father's love, so also the Church is the sacrament of Christ's love. For she is certainly an external sign, visible and manifest (this is her institutional, hierarchical and organizational aspect). And she is at the same time an efficacious sign, endowed in a permanent manner with the saving power of the Risen Lord and his sanctifying Spirit (and this is her internal, mystical aspect). In the Church therefore the sign-value cannot be dissociated from her internal efficacy, for these two realities, though distinct, are absolutely inseparable and both make up of one single body (cf. Vatican II, LG8). God's saving love, which had already become Christic at the incarnation with a certain sacramental structure, becomes now ecclesial without losing anything of that sacramental structure, which will be present in the seven sacraments.

The individuals who constitute the People of God are to be saved in their concrete, existential situations. Each individual is caught up in that salvific torrent of God's saving mercy now in the sacrament, for the merciful God saves us in Christ and in his Church through the instrumentality of the sacraments.

### **The Excellence of Eucharist**

Yet the seven sacraments do not all have the same intrinsic value and worth. The Eucharist exceeds all the rest (CF 1516-1518). For the Eucharist can rightly be said to be the sacramental memorial of the entire work of Redemption.

1. First of all, it looks at the past, at Christ's sacrificial saving act, unique and unrepeatable, but handed over to the Church to be repeated, in the sacramental form till the end of time. The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection.
2. But Christ, the sacrament of the Father, is rendered, present in the Church under the form of bread and wine, here and now. It is the Risen Christ, substantially present in the sacramental representation of the past Paschal Mystery.
3. At the same time, this very eucharistic presence of Christ, which recapitulates past and present, points to the future, to the Church's eschatological completion. For the Christ present is not the suffering, but emphatically the glorified Christ in the midst of his eschatological glory. Whenever the Eucharist is celebrated, a kind of epiphany of the glory of Christ and a guarantee of the Church's final glorification take place.

Therefore the Church believes in the past saving Event, now rendered sacramentally present. She loves the eucharistic Christ, present in her midst; and hopes for the final manifestation of her own glory. The eucharistic mystery is really "like the centre of the Christian religion" (Pius XII).

The excellence of the Eucharist over the other Sacraments (CF 1516) is also seen from its deeply ecclesial dimension. For the Eucharist is essentially the renewal of the New Covenant, which unites the People to their God, a Covenant that is, sealed, by the Son's own blood. The Eucharist therefore strengthens the link of union between the Church and the God who promises salvation. At the eucharistic celebration the hierarchical structure of the Church is manifested with the ministerial priest and the faithful exercising each his own distinctive function in the totality of the ecclesial eucharistic offering. Given the intrinsic nature of the sacrifice and its sign-value, it is the Church that offers herself to the Father, together with the Risen Kyrios. As broad, and all-embracing is the aspect of the fruits of the memorial sacrifice, which extend,

far and wide to the entire Church and, even beyond her borders, to the whole world. All these rich fruits flow from its centre, the glorified eucharistic Christ.

Finally, the same ecclesial dimension is perceptible in the deepest" effect of the Eucharist, which is the increase in the already existing unity of the People of God. Rightly has the Eucharist been called, 'the sacrament of unity' (Augustine). The ecumenical unity of all Christians will, one day, be the supreme fruit of the Eucharist. This ecclesial dimension is more prominently visible in the Eucharist than in the other sacraments.

The central meaning of the Eucharist is already conveyed by the etymology of the term "Eucharistia", which derives from the "thanksgiving" used by Jesus at the Last Supper (cf. Institution texts below). The English 'thanksgiving' does not quite convey the deep meaning of the term, for in the Eucharist the attention is focussed not only on the psychological disposition of the person but also, and mainly, on the object that elicits that disposition. Hence the word should embrace both the aspects, subjective and objective. It simply means: "to praise and give thanks for a gift received", or, more fully, "the Eucharist is the actualising of the salvific reality 'Jesus' through the words of thanksgiving uttered over the bread and wine" (Betz).

This actualisation of the work of Jesus is and will always remain a mystery, not a rational dispute subject to the vague impressions of the human mind. A reflection on the revealed datum, no matter how deep and thorough, will never be able to dispel the intrinsic obscurity of the Eucharist. Not only the fact of the real presence, but also -and especially- the dimensions of memorial and sacrifice will always elude the full grasp of the inquiring human mind. For the Eucharist is part of revelation, and revelation is to be received in the humble obscurity of faith, rather than in the triumphant splendours of the vision. It is the eschatological glory of Christ that is present in the Eucharist, but always apprehended through the veil of faith. The Eucharist will always remain a 'mysterium fidei'.

### **Ecumenical Interest**

The 1970s have witnessed a remarkable proliferation of ecumenical eucharistic agreements between the various Christian churches even in delicate areas which in the past had proved resistant to any mutual reconciliation: agreed statements by Anglicans and Catholics (1971), by Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics (1972), by the World Council of Churches (1975), by Lutherans and Catholics (1978), etc. A complete agreement on the Eucharist between the various churches has not yet been reached, but the gap of separation is rapidly closing up. Consequently any modern treatment of the Eucharist must keep these new developments in mind, not primarily because of a legitimate concern with the historical past, but rather as a preparation for a final reconciliation that lies in the future.

The day seems to be approaching when the Eucharist will cease to be a sacrament of division and become once again what it was always meant to be the sign and source of Christian unity.

### **Pastoral Orientation**

The general orientation of the treatise will be eminently pastoral. For the priest, in his pastoral life, is not primarily a defender of the truth, but a steward entrusted with the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4,1), a minister of reconciliation (2 Cor

5,18); and the faithful will not ask for technical proofs, but rather for a positive, dispassionate exposition of the riches contained in Revelation. For this Revelation is not primarily meant to be defended, but to be given out, to be imparted (cf.OT n.16); and the priest is, not primarily a theologian but a shepherd of the faithful. "One should have recourse to a way of presenting things more in keeping with a teaching particularly pastoral in character" (Paul VI: Address at second. sess .Vat II, 29 Sept. 1963).

This obviously demands a change in terminology.

We need to examine whether our manner of expression contains statements or ways of saying things difficult for non-Catholics to understand. An abstract and purely intellectual manner of speech... is not understood by Orientals. On the other hand a biblical and patristic manner of speech by itself would avoid and should prevent many difficulties, prejudices and confusions "(Bishop De Smedt, 1<sup>st</sup> sess. Vat. II, 29 Nov. 1962).

And Vatican II is emphatic: "Catholic belief needs to be explained, more profoundly and precisely in ways and in terminology which our separated brethren too can really understand" (UR n. 11). All this implies a prudent, yet courageous readiness to alter and modify a terminological approach perhaps of long standing but which now, with the passage of time, has become unsuitable or hardly understandable.

Not only the terminology used, but also the thought-pattern of the past may have to be changed. Immutability of revealed truth does not imply a similar immutability of the conceptual patterns in which that truth is expressed. "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way it is expressed, is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration..."(John XXIII, 1<sup>st</sup> sess. Vat II, 1962). But the replacement of unsuitable thought-patterns necessarily demands and presupposes the previous, delicate task of detecting with certainty an immutable dogma of faith and distinguishing it from its mutable, historical manifestations. The enterprise is threatened by a double danger, that of an excessively rigid adherence to the past, under the cover of fidelity; and that of an over-adaptation which, under the pretence of pastoral adaptability, throws out the "baby along with the bath-water.

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## THE MEMORIAL OF CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

At the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity,(16) a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. (SC 47)

The extraordinary richness of the Eucharistic mystery cannot possibly be conveyed by one single term. The Eucharist is a many-faceted reality that overflows our conceptual expressions, which will always remain necessarily partial and will therefore fall short of the complete Eucharistic reality. Our inability to grasp and express comprehensively the fullness of the mystery accounts for the plurality of names that are usually attached to it by the various Christian denominations. All these ways of speaking are certainly correct, but all of them are limited and none is perfect, for none is able to express the plenitude contained in the Eucharist.

The description of the Eucharist as a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection will probably sound to some as dangerously close to the Protestant conception. For, after all, it is not so long ago that Pope Pius XII in the encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947) gave the Catholic Church a theologically comprehensive description of the eucharistic mystery, but —significantly and as a typical reflection of the mentality of the times — insisted emphatically on the sacrificial nature of the eucharistic celebration, with only a passing glance at the memorial aspect. It was Vatican II that definitely changed these perspectives. While acknowledging the legitimacy of the previous approach centered on sacrifice, the Council welcomed a return to the strongly biblical conception of the memorial. Consequently, Catholics at present need not feel uneasy, as if this way of conceiving and explaining the Eucharist were a betrayal of a cherished Catholic tradition.

We are definitely not abandoning that tradition, far from it; we are only making a fresh attempt, in keeping with the directives of Vatican II, to express the mystery in categories that are no less traditional, even if they had been unfortunately neglected by Catholic theology for centuries. We are not thereby yielding to subtle Protestant pressure; we are only making an honest attempt to be more faithful to the word of God and in the process trying to come closer to the heart of the Eucharist.

Our traditional Catholic insistence on the dimension of sacrifice to the almost complete neglect of the aspect of memorial has had in some cases the unfortunate consequence of glorifying excessively the Mass by placing it almost on a par with Jesus' historical sacrifice on Calvary. The Mass is in no way a repetition of that sacrifice, which stands supreme in its uniqueness. The Mass is only the memorial, but is a very rich memorial, of that unique and unrepeatable sacrifice. It is this memorial approach that will bring out at once the intrinsic excellence as well as the unavoidable limitations of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

## 1 — THE PASSOVER BLESSING

The key term *anamnesis*, variously rendered in English as 'remembrance', 'memorial' or 'memory', occurs thrice in the institution narratives (Lk 22,19; 1 Cor 11,24-25). "Do this as a memorial of me". What did Jesus mean by this? The formula is so incredibly dense, so utterly brief and almost cryptic, that its real meaning and theological import are not immediately clear. And yet, the significance of the expression is buried deep in the Bible itself, for the concept of the memorial is typically Hebrew.

The Jewish *berakah* was the long central blessing that, in keeping with the prescribed liturgy, the head of the family or group of friends had to pronounce in the course of the Passover meal, sandwiched between the other two, much shorter blessings over the unleavened bread and the third cup. The *berakah* opened up with a joyous hymn of praise to Yahweh, a real blessing to God, which eventually gave its name to the entire prayer. It was short and stereotyped in form, an enthusiastic invitation to divine praise. This was followed by the explicit declaration of the motive or reason for the assembly's praises. The motive was always one of the salvific wonders wrought by God in favour of his People, particularly their deliverance from Egypt and God's subsequent providential care before their settlement in the Promised Land. The memory of these past salvific events aroused in them a profound sense of admiration and wonder, of marveling joy coupled with gratitude. This is the central part of the blessing; it is the memorial or remembrance of the salvific wonders performed by God. It is a real commemoration in which the past event becomes symbolically present here and now, laden with its entire saving efficacy.

It is "a veritable kerygmatic annunciation to the assembly that this same *mirabile* (wonder) is present here, active now, accomplishing still its purpose within the life of each and every member of the worshipping people". The aspect of joyful gratitude, therefore, and perhaps even more, the marveling joy that pervades the entire blessing express the heart of the memorial. The central part of the blessing is concluded by a final doxology, which in reality is, but a return to the initial motif of praise, differently coloured according to the various themes commemorated in the memorial. Hence, the Jewish *berakah* is not an act directed primarily to the material elements present on the table for the celebration (bread and wine), but rather to God. It is an act of worship, steeped in a general, enveloping atmosphere of grateful, joyful wonder and enthusiastic praise to God for his saving intervention in the history of his People.

## 2 — THE NON-EUCHARISTIC MEMORIAL

The Jewish *berakah* or blessing then offers us the liturgical setting of the memorial, which is framed by an initial invitation to praise, and a concluding doxology in which the same note of grateful praise is struck again. Yet it would be wrong to assume that the solemn Passover meal is the only instance of biblical memorial. Both the Old as well as the New Testament are like a plentiful mine of rich materials connected with the notion of memorial. We have only to painstakingly extract the solid chunk of marble from this multicolored mine which is the Bible, in order to discern the real meaning and salvific import of this rich concept of memorial which should not be restricted to the Eucharist. Its non-eucharistic usage will determine how it should be understood when it occurs within a eucharistic context.

The history of the Flood at the time of Noah, as narrated in Genesis, supplies us with the first case of a real memorial. When the waters of the Flood subside, God blesses Noah: "Behold I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you. I will remember my covenant, which is between you and me.... When the bow is in the clouds I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant..." (Gen 9,9-17). God will remember his covenant, namely, the sight of the rainbow will be like a reminder to him, a periodically recurring memorial that his covenant with Noah and his posterity must stand firm.

The Jewish Passover itself, which is the immediate background to the Last Supper, offers us another case of biblical memorial. In reference to the Passover, the Lord said, "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast" (Ex 12,14). In the course of the celebration not only are the worshippers reminded of Yahweh's merciful, repeated interventions in their lives, but—surprisingly—God himself is reminded, namely, his past promises are brought before him that he may always remember them. The solemn blessing after the Passover meal included the following prayer: "Our God and God of our fathers, on this day of the festival of *matzoth* may there come you the remembrance of us and our fathers, of Jerusalem your holy city, of the Messiah son of David your servant.... Eternal God, remember us this day for happiness . . . ." The act of reminding Yahweh, of holding him to his salvific promises, may sound strange to us, but it is perfectly normal for the Hebrew mind. Moses prays to God, "Remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, your servants, to whom you swore by yourself and made this promise.... I will make your offspring as many as the stars in heaven" (Ex 32,13). The psalmist too prays in the same vein: "Yahweh, remember David and all the hardships he endured..." (Ps 132,1). The divine promises are constantly being placed before the Lord as a reminder to him.

On the other hand, the feast of the Unleavened Bread, which is part of the Passover celebrations, is also a memorial, a reminder, not however to God, but rather to the People: "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days.... It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. . . .And it shall be to you . . . as a memorial between your eyes" (Ex 13,7-9).

The Jewish liturgy witnessed the weekly replacement on the altar of twelve loaves of bread, the so-called showbread, accompanied by the following prayer: "And you shall put pure frankincense with each row (of loaves), that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion to be offered by fire to the Lord. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall set it in order before the Lord . . . as a covenant forever" (Lev 24,7-8). These weekly loaves, therefore, were like a continual reminder placed before the Lord that he might not forget his promises.

A couple of instances will show that exactly the same meaning is kept up in the New Testament too. Luke narrates that Cornelius, the Roman centurion, was "a devout man who feared God . . . and prayed constantly to God" (Acts 10,3). Quite unexpectedly one day he receives the vision of an angel who comes to him with the message: "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial to the Lord" (Acts 10,4). This sounds almost like an echo of the Jewish liturgy referred to in Lev 2,2: "... and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion upon the altar, an offering by fire, a pleasing odour to the Lord". Like the sacrifice of old, so also the righteous ethical behaviour of Cornelius and his constant prayer have ascended like a cloud of incense before the throne of God, as a memorial to him that he may never forget the

goodness of the Roman centurion. Cornelius' upright life is a real memorial before the Lord, for "your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God" (Acts 10,31).

The second case concerns Jesus himself. After being anointed by the sinful woman, Jesus solemnly declares: "Wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory other" (Mk 14,9). This memory or memorial is probably to be placed within the setting of a liturgical offering. It does not mean that her memory will in future be preserved and her act recounted to future generations, but rather that her costly offering to the Lord will ascend to him like a memorial, like a prayer of incense. It is not subjective memory but rather objectified memorial, primarily directed, not to men but to God, who will not forget her. In the opinion of J. Jeremias, "Mark 14,9 . . .'in memory of her', in all probability relates to the merciful remembrances of God: 'that God may (mercifully) remember her'".

Paul often prays for his Christians, his petitionary prayer for them ascends to God like a memorial. For instance, he writes to the Thessalonians: "We always mention you in our prayers... and constantly remember before God our Father how you have shown your faith" (1 Thes 1,2-3). Paul and Timothy bring before God as an objectified memorial, the faith and love of their Christians. The strength and constancy of the Thessalonians become the object of Paul's memorial, the content of his thanksgiving to God and especially of his intercession for them, that God may continue to be merciful to them.

The sum total of all the above is that the memorial is a dynamic movement in two directions: it is a reminder to the People of God's unshakable fidelity to his salvific promises and this produces in the People a sense of profound gratitude for favours received. And the memorial is also a reminder sent to God, that he should not forget his promises in the future, and although a reminder to God may strike us as something fanciful and totally unnecessary, since he is not likely to forget what he has himself promised, yet what actually lies under the anthropomorphic expression of a reminder is nothing but a petition, a supplication, a request for further favours. And so, joining both the dimensions together, the biblical memorial emerges as a double reminder, to the People and to God, which respectively produces gratitude and expresses supplication. Gratitude and supplication, therefore, constitute the core of the biblical memorial.

When the memorial is directed to God, it acquires the form of a double action, for on the one hand something is brought before God as a reminder to him. The reminder is not only — and perhaps not even primarily — a prayer, but rather an action; it is a petition embodied in an action. So, for instance, the showbread is laid before the eyes of the Lord (Lev 24,7), the prayers of the righteous are brought before God (Enoch 99,3), Cornelius' alms and prayers are sent to God as a memorial. In all these cases God is reminded, not through a prayer but through an action. The People's supplication takes the form of something brought before God.

On the other hand, the memorial is also a supplication to God that he may act. The worshipping community, through the celebration of the memorial, asks God for an efficacious intervention. The community acts before God so that God may act for the community. The worshippers bring something before God as an implicit request that he may act — mercifully or punishingly. For instance, it is said that God does not remember sin (Jer 31, 23), but he will remember the iniquities of Babylon (Apoc

18,5): it means, respectively, that God will forgive the sinner and punish Babylon. "God's remembrance is always an action" (J. Jeremias: The Eucharistic Words, p. 249). The memorial, therefore, designates an active presentation before God intended to induce him to act.

This being the theological content of the biblical memorial, we are now in a position to understand the import of the command issued by Jesus at the end of the Last Supper, immediately after the first Eucharistic celebration, when he asked his disciples to repeat as a memorial of him the same action he had just performed.

### 3 — "DO THIS AS A MEMORIAL OF ME"

After having briefly examined the content of the biblical memorial, let us now return to the Eucharist. What did Jesus mean by this brief expression? He was asking the infant Church around the table to celebrate the Eucharistic mystery as a memorial of him, and in the light of the above this Eucharistic memorial emerges as the memorial of the Son offered to the Father by the Church.

It is a memorial of the Son. "Do this as a memorial of me", that is to say, the Eucharistic celebration is a reminder, a supplication sent to the Father that he may remember his Son who died and was raised for the Church. The worshipping community, in the presence of the Father, appeals to the entire life of Jesus, but especially to his death and glorification, that in virtue of what he did, God may continue to be merciful to the Church. This supplication is included in the usual expression of remembrance or reminder sent to God. The literary form of a reminder may sound childish, but the content of supplication it covers is definitely not. The Church is humbly beseeching God that, because of his Son ("in memory of me"), the Father may continue pouring out his graces on the pilgrim People of God. This attitude of remembrance that covers a request is profoundly biblical, for a petition that Yahweh may remember the Messiah was already expressed in an ancient Passover prayer: "God of our fathers, may there arise and come ...be seen, accepted, heard, recollected and remembered... the remembrance of the Messiah" (N. Goldberg, Passover Haggadah, p. 30).

It is specifically the memorial of Jesus' death and *resurrection* that is brought, through a liturgical action, before the Father. Gone is the time when even official Church documents used to refer to the Mass as a memorial of Christ's death without the slightest reference to his resurrection. The entirety of the paschal mystery embraces both death and resurrection in an unbreakable unity, and it would be a deplorable distortion of the redemption to overstress one-sidedly the aspect of death to the neglect of his glorification. Jesus did not redeem mankind simply by dying, but rather by dying and rising from the dead. Any consideration of the Eucharistic memorial that narrowly concentrates on and reminds the Father of Good Friday with the exclusion of Easter Sunday would be totally unacceptable. Rightly therefore Vatican II states in the document on the Liturgy that Christ decided, "to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, the memorial of his death and resurrection".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution on the Liturgy, n. 47. Here Vatican II was quietly correcting the imperfect formula used by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947), which described the Eucharist as "a memorial of his death" (n. 74).

Even after the completion of Christ's paschal mystery, however, this supplication in a way continues, for the Eucharist is to be celebrated "until he comes" (1 Cor 11,26). The Church is grateful to God for having sent his Son once, and now, gathered around the altar, she beseeches God to send him again. It seems to be almost an indirect allusion to the *Maranatha* with which the early Christian community prayed longingly for the final, definitive coming of the Lord.

Hence, the death and glorification of Jesus are proclaimed at every Eucharistic celebration as an event of the past that has yet to be brought to its fulfillment in the future. And so the entire life of Jesus is recapitulated and brought before the Father by the praying Church in order to induce him to act, namely, to bring to completion the unfulfilled work of redemption. The very remembrance of the past (death and resurrection of Christ) thrusts the Church forward in a movement of longing anticipation towards the unfulfilled climax of her complete, final liberation. The fullness of the Eucharistic memorial looks simultaneously backward and forward, to the past and to the future, to Calvary and to the Parousia. All this enormous wealth of meaning is encapsulated in that pithy expression, " . . . as a memorial of me." The community, by means of her Eucharistic action, reminds and petitions the Father to continue blessing the Church that he loves. The memorial becomes an earnest entreaty, a humble supplication, and an ardent appeal to the work of Christ, before the Father, for the benefit of the Church.

In entreating God for her own future, the Church remembers also her past, and this 'flashback', this calling back to mind her own salvation gratuitously and lovingly bestowed on her by the suffering and risen Christ issues forth into a movement of deep gratitude. If the Eucharistic repetition of what Jesus did at the Supper, the celebration "as a memorial of me," induces the Church to an act of supplication before God, the same celebration prompts her also to an unceasing act of thanksgiving, a real '*eucharistia*'. Thanksgiving and supplication are inextricably bound together; they cannot possibly be dissociated, for both these dimensions belong to the core and kernel of the memorial.

Supplication and thanksgiving are the two essential attitudes of the Church, who simultaneously utters a deeply felt 'thank you' for the past and a hopeful 'please' for the future. If memories of the past induce her to thank God, the vivid consciousness of her own needs impels her to ask for the future. The entire life of the Church, past, present and future, is concentrated in the Eucharistic memorial.

Most Christians imagine that the centre of the Eucharist is Jesus, but in this they are badly mistaken. Jesus undoubtedly plays an absolutely essential role in the Eucharistic celebration, but this narrow concentration on his person seems to be the result of an unwarranted restriction of the Eucharist exclusively to the aspect of the real presence. Apparently this is the only dimension of the Eucharistic reality that many people know, and this is certainly unfortunate. If, besides holding firmly to the doctrine of the real presence, they had understood and assimilated the content — theologically so profound and spiritually so enriching — of the Eucharistic memorial, maybe this partial distortion would have been avoided.

The entire Eucharistic action is not addressed to Jesus, but to his Father, for it is the Father who is reminded of the salvific work performed by the Son. The memorial is an essential movement directed to the person of the Father, who is simultaneously thanked for the past and entreated for the future. The entire

Eucharistic thrust is directed towards the Father, rather than towards Jesus. The one who is reminded and asked to act is Jesus' Father and our Father, for it is exclusively to him that the double movement of the memorial, thanksgiving and supplication, is directed. The Church reminds the Father, thanks and requests him to continue the work of redemption which is not yet entirely fulfilled, not because Christ's work was in any way incomplete, but rather because the immeasurable fullness of his life, death and resurrection is not yet entirely assimilated by the pilgrim Church. The work of redemption remains incomplete, not because of Jesus but because of the Church. It is not he but she that has a long way to go yet, trying to assimilate within herself the wealth of redemption initiated by the Father and accomplished by Christ. Since the Eucharist, from the viewpoint of the memorial, is directed to the Father, the unavoidable conclusion should be that the Eucharistic memorial is a theocentric rather than a christocentric action.

In spite of all that has preceded it is more than likely that the concept of memorial, when applied to the Eucharist, will leave people unsatisfied, for to reduce the mystery of the Eucharist to a reminder sent to the Father seems at first sight to equate it with an exercise of mere subjective remembrance. The Eucharistic memorial is not only a subjective remembrance of events of the past, but also an objective actualization of the work of our redemption. It does not take place in the subjective realm, in the psychological memory of the celebrating congregation, but in the objective sacramental order, where the Church brings forth before the Father, in an action immersed with joyful gratitude and expectant supplication, the salvation accomplished by Christ. It goes far beyond the subjective memory of a past event. For, in reality this event becomes sacramentally present in the liturgical action, laden with its intrinsic efficacy and full salvific content. The Church, through the memorial, is directly connected with the very climax of Jesus' life, with his death and resurrection, now rendered present on the altar through sacramental signs. The flimsy character of a merely psychological remembrance yields to the marvellous density of a past salvific event rendered sacramentally present here and now.

Furthermore, it is not only the saving event of the past that becomes sacramentally present. The very person of the glorified Jesus, permanently transfigured, is also rendered objectively present in the midst of the memorial. The congregation is not merely thinking of a person who died and rose in the distant past, whose memory is kept artificially alive through a psychological device; rather Jesus himself becomes sacramentally present under bread and wine, imparting to the liturgical action a density that goes well beyond the realm of subjective memory. His presence is detectable only through faith, but with the eyes of faith we do perceive the presence of the Resurrected, who envelops the entire liturgical action as well as the worshipping congregation. Jesus is alive and active in the midst of the community. Consequently, the Eucharistic memorial bursts the constrictions of a merely subjective remembrance by means of a double presence: that of the unique event of the redemption and that of the person himself of the redeemer.

Not only are redemption and redeemer rendered sacramentally present here and now, but the saving effects of the past too flow now into the present. The salvific action itself—the work of human redemption—lies in the distant past, untouchable in its uniqueness and unrepeatable in its majestic grandeur, but streams of grace and salvation flow out of it and pour down into the present. Now, in the Eucharistic

memorial, we are drawn into the torrent of salvation, soaked in its vivifying effects, plunged into Christ's paschal mystery. The R. Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission has put it beautifully: in the memorial "the Lord calls his People into his presence and confronts them with his salvation. In this creative act of God the salvation events of the past become the offer of salvation for the present and the promise of salvation for the future".<sup>2</sup> This is the incredible wealth of meaning contained in Jesus' command at the end of the Supper, "Do this as a memorial of me."

#### 4 — A THEOLOGICAL TRIPTYCH

We are now confronted with a real triptych or triangle, with three distinct realities whose inner connections are not obviously clear. We readily accept that our present Eucharist is somehow linked with both the Supper and the paschal mystery, but how are these three events interrelated? How does the death and resurrection of Christ connect with the Supper, on the one hand, and with the Eucharist of today, on the other? A firm and clear grasp of this theological triptych is necessary if we are to avoid possible misunderstandings and inaccurate conceptions.

It is obvious that the Supper chronologically preceded the cross-resurrection, and this is the reason why the Supper cannot in any way be called the memorial of the cross, for the memorial always and necessarily commemorates something, which has already taken place previously. When Jesus instituted the Eucharist his death and glorification lay still in the future and could not, therefore, be commemorated at the Supper. Yet this is not to deny that the Supper is intimately linked to the cross. Without the salvific reality of the cross-resurrection (Calvary, for short), the Supper would not stand; it would be entirely devoid of all sacrificial value. The Supper, as sacrifice, depends on the cross absolutely, but this dependence is one-sided and non-mutual, for it is the Eucharist that depends on Calvary, not the other way around. Calvary would stand supreme without the Supper, but the Supper without Calvary would disintegrate instantly, it would be left hanging in midair, meaningless and unsupported. Both of them are undoubtedly sacrifices, but they belong to two different realms, respectively historical or empirical (Calvary) and sacramental (Supper). The Supper anticipates the cross in the sacramental order and as such it can be repeated, whereas Calvary remains supreme, unique and unrepeatable, alone in its majestic solitude. The Supper is not coordinated with but rather essentially subordinated to, the cross-resurrection, from which it draws all its value and intrinsic worth. Obviously the Supper does not reenact or reproduce the cross. Calvary has no duplicates.

The *Qurbano* of today is not the memorial of the Supper, but rather its reproduction, its repetition. The *Qurbano* is the memorial of Calvary, not of the Supper, and the *Qurbano* is the reenactment of the Supper, not of Calvary. At the end of the Supper Jesus enjoined on the Church the command to do what he had done, as the memorial of his death and resurrection, and the result is today's *Qurbano*. Yet, despite this substantial identity between the Supper and the *Qurbano*, the latter is not a carbon copy of the former, for several differences between the two stand out clearly.

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<sup>2</sup> The Eucharist, n. 36: One in Christ 15 (1979), p. 260

Whereas at the Supper Christ was still subject to death and as yet unglorified, now he is risen, free from the clutches of death forever. Similarly, the person of the offerer in both the Supper and the *Qurbano* is the same, Jesus who offered himself to his Father at the Supper and who continues to offer himself at the *Qurbano*. Now, however, he does not do it directly as he did in the upper room but rather through the intermediate ministry of the Church to whom he committed his own sacrifice. At the Supper the Church (that is, the Twelve) was only the beneficiary of the new sacrifice, not its co-offerer. There the only offerer was Christ, with the Church at the receiving end, as the recipient of the sacrifice itself, made over to her as a gift. On that occasion she did not co-offer the sacrifice in any way, not even in a subordinate role, whereas now, at the *Qurbano*, she is the real offerer, besides being the partial victim along with Christ.

Despite these dissimilarities, however, one is bound to acknowledge that there is no substantial difference between what Jesus did alone at the Supper and what he does today through the instrumentality of the Church. We go on repeating the Supper and commemorating Calvary "until he comes". There is no shortcut connecting the *Qurbano* directly with Calvary; the *Qurbano* links up with Calvary only by reproducing the Supper, not independently of it. The Supper, therefore, remains absolutely essential for a correct understanding and accurate formulation of the Eucharistic mystery.

## THE EUCHARIST IS A SACRIFICIAL MEMORIAL

The Eucharist is undoubtedly a memorial, but it is not only a memorial, it is specifically a Sacrificial Memorial. The various approaches that together make up the fullness of the Eucharist should not be associated or even artificially juxtaposed but rather linked up by their internal unity. The Eucharist, for example, is not a memorial and also a sacrifice; it is rather a Sacrificial Memorial.

The Eucharistic memorial of the Lord is a sacrifice because its content is profoundly sacrificial. We commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ and this salvific event is not only sacrificial, it is the sacrifice par excellence. The sacrificial character of the paschal mystery is like a torrent that, welling up on Calvary, flows down and floods the entire Eucharistic celebration. We commemorate in the Eucharist the sacrifice of the death and resurrection of Jesus and therefore the liturgical celebration itself becomes essentially sacrificial.

The memorial goes up to the Lord in an ascending sacrificial movement. Memorial and sacrifice are inextricably bound together. Ultimately, it would seem, the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it is a memorial, rather than the other way around. It is not the sacrifice that produces the memorial, but the memorial that begets the sacrifice. The memorial is the root and the sacrifice is the fruit.

## The Eucharistic Mystery in the Scripture

The mystery of the Eucharist is the sacramental representation of the sacrifice of Christ. It is the liturgical celebration of the new covenant, which God established with his people in the mystery of Christ's sacrificial Passover unto the Father. Its context is the new covenant; its content is the sacramental celebration of the new covenant in the sacrificial meal.

### Old Testament Background

#### 1. The Passover

In Israel, every meal is endowed with a certain sacred character (1 Sam 14,31-35) and conversely, every solemn religious action in orthodox Yahwism is accompanied by a sacred meal (1 Sam 9,12). Every sacred meal served to strengthen and confirm God's covenant with the table guests. Moses and the elders had eaten and drunk in the presence of God (Ex 24,11); Saul partakes of a sacred meal with Samuel (1 Sam 9,22). The Levitic priests share in the shewbread offered to Yahweh as Memorial (Lev 24,9). The sacred meal par excellence is that in which all the people assembled together in the sacred place where Yahweh is present, share together (Dt 12:4-7; 11-22).

Of all the sacred meals in Israel, the most solemn and the most significant in the post exilic liturgy was the paschal feast. The paschal feast is conceived as a memorial of the great deeds of Yahweh in the history of his chosen people, particularly of the exodus event and the Sinaitic covenant. The celebration of the Jewish Passover is very important for the understanding of the Eucharist, for it is the Jewish celebration of the Passover that supplies the liturgical framework of the Eucharist, the feast in the course of which Jesus handed over to his infant church the gift of his body and blood.

The origins of the feast remain obscure. An analysis of the feast as described in Ex 12 reveals that it was made up of two originally independent feasts: the feast of the Passover proper and that of *Matzoth*. By the time of the composition of Ex 12, both the feasts were so interlocked that the name of Passover embraced them both.

The Passover feast (cfr Ex 12,1-14) grew out of a springtime festival sacrifice of a young animal to procure the prosperity of the flock. This ancient pastoral practice goes back to pre-Mosaic times, the Hebrews were still semi-nomads. At the time of Moses its religious significance was profoundly changed. Now this celebration is made to serve as a memorial for the deliverance from Egypt. It is to be celebrated annually, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nisan*, in family groups. A lamb is to be offered to Yahweh (Ex 12,3-6). Its bones may not be broken (Num 9,12). The blood is used to smear the Jewish houses as a sign of preservation (Ex 12,7.22-23). The lamb is to be eaten hurriedly, before setting out on the journey (Ex 12,8-11). The Passover therefore signifies the passing or transit of Yahweh's avenging angel (Ex 12,13.23.27).

The feast of *Matzoth* (Ex 12,15-20) arose from an ancient agricultural feast in which, an offering was made of the first fruit of the crop (cfr Lev 23,9-14). The feast was probably borrowed, from the Canaanites after the chosen People settled down in Palestine (Lev 23, 10). The word 'matzoth' means unleavened bread and it gave its name to the feast, which was observed at the beginning of the barley harvest. It was

protracted from the 15 to the 21 of *Nisan*. During this time only bread made from the new harvest could be eaten, as representing a new beginning. Under divine inspiration, both the feasts become the commemoration of Yahweh's springtime intervention: the deliverance from Egypt. After the Exile, there is a true obligation of celebrating the feast, binding on all and only the circumcised (Ex 12, 43-49).

Therefore, the Passover "is a liturgical feast, involving sacrifice and an accompanying cultic banquet, celebrated by the community of the chosen People. Accomplished in the present, it commemorates the deliverance from Egypt in such a way that it represents the past redemptive activity "and looks forward to the future definitive intervention of Yahweh"(Kilmartin p.49).

**Brief explanations of the various elements involved in the feast of Passover**

a) The Passover emerged as a liturgical feast, involving sacrifice and an accompanying cultic banquet, celebrated by the community of the chosen people.

b) Sacrifice: The killing of the Passover lamb was considered to be the sacrificial act. "And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God from the flock of the herd" (Dt 16,2-3).

c) Cultic banquet: The Passover was also a liturgical meal, the ritual of which is made up of eating the unleavened bread (symbolizing the hurry of the exodus departure), the bitter herbs (symbolizing the trials endured by the people on their way to the promised land), and the lamb, the victim of the sacrifice (expressing a personal involvement in the celebration), which had to be eaten as directed: "with a girdle round your waist, sandals on your feet, a staff in your hand. You will eat it hastily, it is the Passover in honour of Yahweh" (Ex 1,11).

d) The communal character: A minimum of 10 participants is needed for the celebration and if a particular household does not reach that number, then the family shall join its neighbour (Ex 12,4). The communal character is essential to the celebration and a merely private celebration of the feast is not only inconceivable, but was strictly forbidden.

e) It is a celebration of the chosen people: Non-Jews are definitely excluded from the celebration. "No uncircumcised person shall eat it" (Ex 12,48). All Israelites are strictly bound to keep it and an unjustified neglect of the celebration is punishable with excommunication (Num 9,13).

f) Commemoration of the past; It is not a mere subjective remembrance of the past salvific event, for there is a mysterious yet real identification between the liturgical celebration and the past event now commemorated. The past redemptive activity of Yahweh is rendered symbolically present here and now as if the worshippers had themselves come out of Egypt. The feast is to be kept every year as a "memorial" (*zikkaron, anamnesis*) of Yahweh's deliverance of his people and of the exodus event, culminating in the covenant. In the yearly celebration of the paschal meal, the exodus-event was made present, as it were actualized. The rites of the eating of the paschal lamb, of the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, the surrounding ritual of joyful praise and thanksgiving for God's deeds make the people experience and re-live the past events.

g) The character of the Passover feast as an event: This is testified by the liturgical setting given it in the Jewish liturgy. During the celebration, the head of the

family must, at the request of his son, explain the meaning of the ritual. "This is because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt" (Ex 13,8). In the *Mishnah* we read: "From generation to generation each one is bound to consider himself as having personally come out of Egypt, for it is written: 'This is because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt' ... He did all these marvels for us and for our fathers".

h) The various blessings (*berakoth*, singular = *berakah*) in the paschal liturgy: proclaimed God's wonderful deeds and blessed him for them. This proclamation gives to the feast the character of a liturgy of praise (*eulogia*) and thanksgiving (*eucharistia*). When the blessing is pronounced over the objects, they become sacred (are blessed) as result of the praise given to God over them.

i) The ritual: The main features of the paschal meal are the following:

01) Preliminary course: A first cup is accompanied with a short blessing and then the bitter herbs are consumed.

02) The Passover liturgy: The head of the family explains the special features of the Passover meal (Ex 12,26) and proclaims the outline of the story, the *haggadah*. It is followed by the singing of the first part of the Passover *hallel* (Ps 113-114). Then the second cup is drunk.

03) The main meal; The main meal consists of the unleavened bread and the paschal lamb. The head of the family pronounces a blessing over the unleavened bread, distributes it and the meal is eaten with the unleavened bread, the paschal lamb and the bitter herbs.

04) The important ritual action; The president pronounces over the "cup of blessing" - the third cup filled with wine, mixed with water -, a series of *berakoth*. These give praise to God for three reasons: a) for the meal received from him, b) for the whole history of Salvation and c) for the present renewal of Yahweh's creative and redemptive action and the expectation of its final accomplishment in the Messiah's advent and the coming of the kingdom.

05) Conclusion: The second part of the *hallel* (Ps 115-118) is sung in striking harmony.

j) Looking to future: The celebration looks forward to Yahweh's definitive intervention. The recitation of Is 11, a messianic prophecy, on the eighth day of the feast is indicative of this future dimension. The eschatological note is also struck by the *hallel* or hymn sung at the end of the meal. Thus the Passover, celebrated in the present, embraces in an unbreakable unity the past and the future. The past is grasped in faith and the future is apprehended in hope in the celebration of the present.

## 2. Covenant Sacrificial rites

One of the pivotal points of the religious consciousness of Israel was the Sinaiitic Covenant (Mosaic Covenant). This covenant was sealed with a true sacrificial meal. The book of Exodus has preserved a double account of the ritual. a) Ex 24,1-2 and 9. Moses and Aaron and the elders of Israel go up to the mountain where Yahweh dwells. They are called to partake of a sacred meal in the presence of Yahweh whom they are able to see. b) Ex 24, 3-8. Moses having built at the foot of the mountain 12 standing stones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, and an altar to symbolize

Yahweh's presence, offers holocausts. The sprinkling of the blood of the covenant on the altar and on the people seals the union of God with his people. The blood, the symbol of life, which is the property of God, is given by God to be offered to Him in sacrifice and received from him as a token of communion. The blood is sprinkled on both, directly on the people physically present and symbolically on Yahweh represented by the altar and thereby an unbreakable bond of life is symbolised between Yahweh and the people: "I shall be your God and you shall be my people" (Jer 7,23). Hereafter all ritual practices in Israel will be somehow related to the Sinaitic ritual action. The Covenant had been once for all sealed in the blood sprinkled at Sinai. Hence the whole cultic life of Israel presupposed the covenant.

As for its nature: The foundation of the covenant is God's unmerited love freely bestowed on the People. At the same time it is a conditional alliance in which the People are "bound to respect the demands made on them. God's fidelity, however, to the terms of the covenant is met by the People's fickleness and infidelity: The Sinaitic Covenant is soon in shambles and the prophets promise in the name of God a new and eternal Covenant (Jer 31,32), when the People will finally acknowledge God's love and fidelity (Os 2,20-24). The new covenant will be immersed with *shalom* (Ez 36,26). It will supersede the Sinaitic Covenant (Ez 16,20) and bring with it the supreme gift of the Spirit (Ez 36,26ff). This new Covenant is connected, nay, identified with the Messiah: "I have appointed you as a Covenant to the People" (Is 42,6), and it will be sealed by the outpouring of Jesus' blood (Heb 9,11-14).

For the Israelites, blood is nothing but the symbol of life (Dt 12:23 *Be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is life*). It must be noted that nowhere in the OT is the blood of the victim drunk by those partaking of the sacrifice. The communion rite of drinking the blood of the victim will be an innovation by the New Covenant sacrifice (Jn 6:56,60).

The forms of covenant rituals vary in Israel in the course of history. There were holocausts, communion sacrifices, expiatory sacrifices, vegetable offerings, incense offerings etc (Cfr Lev 1-7; 22:17-30). Before the exile the communion sacrifices were more frequent, after the exile, the holocausts. But whatever be their nature, all were related to the Covenant on Mount Sinai.

For the Hebrews, the offering of sacrifice was the centre of their religious life (cfr Lev 1-7). In the beginning, these sacrifices bear a great similarity to pagan sacrifices. But later on, they are gradually purified. Among them, the following types are to be found:

a) Unbloody Sacrifices or offerings in the form of gifts (*minha=gift*) of the first fruits (e.g. flour, bread, wine... cfr Lev 2). They were either public (v. g. the spring-time sacrifice: Lev 23,10-20) or private, like the sacrifice for sin, meant specially for the poor (Lev 5,7-13). Some times these unbloody sacrifices were joined to bloody sacrifices; wine was poured, out at the foot of the altar, part of the sacrificial victim was burned that it may go up in smoke to God, and. the rest was distributed among the priests.

b) Bloody Sacrifices: If an animal is to be offered, first it is killed, then the altar is sprinkled with its blood, and part or the whole of it is eaten. They were of three different kinds:

i) Holocausts (Lev 1), to be offered daily by the people, express man's total surrender to God and therefore constitute the most perfect form of sacrifice. The whole victim was burned, thereby passing into God's own possession. The animals offered were bulls (Lev 1,5), lambs or goats (Lev 1,11); for the poor, turtle doves (Lev 1,15; cfr Lk 2,24). The blood of the victim was poured by the priest on the altar and then the entire victim was burned.

ii) Peace-offerings (Lev 3) or communion offerings, admirably expressed the idea of union with God. The blood was poured on the altar, but only part of the victim was burned (the victim's fat). The meat was given over to the priests and distributed among the participants. This kind of sacrificial meal, with Yahweh as head of the family and the participants as his guests was a symbol and pledge of the bond of friendship uniting God and men.

The Covenant and Paschal sacrifices belong to this category. In the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, the blood was not supposed to placate God, but only to protect the Israelites (cfr Rev 14,1; 7,3 about the sign of the lamb on the elect). Despite the fact that the Egyptian captivity came gradually to be considered as the symbol of sin, the Passover sacrifice is probably not to be regarded as a sacrifice of expiation for sin. In the covenant sacrifice, especially the unitive function of blood stands out, in keeping with the nature and purpose of the covenant itself (cfr Ex 24,4-8; Heb 9).

iii) Sacrifice of expiation, whether sacrifice for sin (Lev 4,1-35) or sacrifice of reparation (Lev 5, 14-26; 17,1-6). The former was offered either to remove some legal impurity or as an expiation for sins committed out of ignorance or frailty. The latter dealt with infringements of rights, either of God or of the neighbour, their end being the restoration of the lost unitive friendship with God. The blood was poured, on the altar, its extremities being only sprinkled. The animal's fat was burned and the meat was either given to priests or burned outside the tent.

The most solemn of all was that offered on the great day of Expiation (*Yom Kippur* Lev 16). The Holy of Holies as well as both the altars, that of incense and that of holocausts were sprinkled with blood. The purpose of the sprinkling was the purification of the sanctuary from the sins committed (Lev 16,17-19), or the sanctification of the altar (v.19), since the sins of the People had polluted the temple of Yahweh. The glory of Yahweh, lost by sins committed in the temple, is restored only after such ritual purification (Ez 43,2-5; 44,4).

It was deeply embedded in the Hebrew mentality that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9,22). The intrinsic and necessary connection between blood and sin (to obtain its expiation) is already given in Lev 17,11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, ...for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life". Therefore blood (signifying life) is something sacred, because it is the symbol of life and life is God-given. By means of the outpouring of blood, man offers his own life to God, signifying that he wants to attain the communion and fellowship with God, which had been destroyed by sin.

Hence, biblically, the effusion or sprinkling of blood is not primarily linked with the idea of punishment for sin, and much less with the notion of substitution of the sinner by the victim, but it rather expresses man's desire of self-offering as a means to achieve communion with God. Hence the fundamental meaning of blood in all three sacrifices is very similar. This communion with God is either first established

(sacrifice of the Covenant) or protected and preserved (Paschal sacrifice) or restored after it had been lost through sin (expiatory sacrifice). Sometimes both the sacrifices are joined, that of expiation (Heb 9,11-14) and the Covenant sacrifice (Heb 9,15-22).

Acceptance of the victim: Every sacrifice consists of two movements; man offers a victim to God and then God accepts the victim which represents man's own self surrender. In the OT this divine acceptance was expressed some times through the burning of the victim. God accepted the victim, transformed into odour of sweetness. This acceptance is also expressed by the divine fire, which descends from heaven and consumes entirely the victim (Lev 9,24; 1 Kgs 18,28). This is quite in keeping with the Semitic conception, which considers God to be 'devouring fire' (Dt 4,24), who often manifests himself in the midst of smoke and fire (OT theophanies: Ex 19,18) and in the form of fire protects the Tent of the Covenant (Ex 40,38). The victim was also considered to be endowed with a certain divine quality and 'to sacrifice' became synonymous with 'to sanctify the victim' (Dt 15,19). The victim accepted by God and overflowing with divine sanctity, was judged to impart this sanctity to those who shared in it (Lev 6,27). Fire descending from heaven did not destroy the victim but rather sanctified it and transmitted it to the divine domain (Lev 9,24; 2 Chr 7,1-3)

At other times, it was the priest, as representative of God, who had to declare whether the sacrifice was acceptable or not. At times the formulas are negative ('It is an abomination'. Cfr Lev 19,7; 22,23). On the contrary, acceptance is manifested through objective statements: 'it is a burnt offering' Lev 1,9; 'it is a cereal offering' Lev 2,6; and more explicitly: 'The Lord your God accepts you' 2 Sam 24,23.

A definition of sacrifice can be given only now, and it should include its three main elements: immolation, oblation and acceptance. Sacrifice is a special act of external cult, whereby man transforms a thing externally visible (immolation) and offers it to God (oblation) to be accepted by Him (acceptance) as a sign of his union with Him.

#### Theology of Sacrifice

There is a purely spiritual notion of sacrifice, which tends to reduce a sacrifice to a purely spiritual action; and contrary to it, there is also a view that nothing short of the killing of a victim is an adequate expression of a sacrifice. But the truth seems to lie between the two opposite extremes: on the one hand, some exterior acts expressive of man's sacrificial spirit is necessary in every sacrifice; on the other, the killing of the victim or the destruction of the offering does not constitute the essence of the sacrificial act. Hence a sacrifice is constituted by a ritual oblation expressive of man's disposition of self-oblation to God.

Sacrifice, belongs to the realm of signs. It is an exterior act of cult, directed to express man's dedication and sacrificial disposition towards God. Two elements must therefore be distinguished in every sacrifice: the interior and the exterior, the sign and the signified. Of the two elements, which makeup a true sacrificial action, the interior act, in a sense, is the most important, for the ritual offering is a lie if it does not express a personal act of oblation. Nonetheless, the interior act of self-oblation becomes strictly sacrificial in so far precisely as it is expressed and carried by a ritual offering. The cultic act of self-oblation is no empty sign; rather it is a symbolic action, in which the sacrificial disposition of the worshipper is contained and by which it is

actuated. If the sacrifice is to take up its full meaning, the person's self-gift must be expressed sensibly.

Thus sacrifice is a gift offering made to God, through which man's self-offering finds a concrete ritual expression. The gift, which is made, is symbolic of the giver's dedication to God; similarly, the acceptance of the gift on God's part is symbolic of the gracious acceptance of the giver. The last and adequate end of every sacrifice is union with God. In this search for union, the various ends of the sacrifice - to give praise and thanks to God, to adore him, to ask for his blessings and to seek his pardon - are implied.

More specifically, two OT sacrifices are usually considered to be announcements of the Eucharistic sacrifice, viz. that of Melchisedek and the prophecy of Malachi.

i) Malachi's prophecy (Mal 1,10-11)

Context: About the year 450 BC disappointment is rampant because the prophecies of Is., Jer. and Amos have not been fulfilled. Disappointment gives way to doubt. Yahweh's saving promises remain a dead letter. What is the value of the Covenant? Leaders and people fail to read the signs of the times and this leads them to religious indifference. In this atmosphere Malachi delivers his prophecy: the promises remain unfulfilled because of the priests' religious cynicism. They offer only imperfect gifts thereby violating the Law (Deut 15,21; Lev 3, 1-6) and Yahweh refuses to accept them. Therefore Levitical cult is rejected outright but a new type of sacrifice is immediately announced, pure and universal sacrifice.

Text: The prophet speaks of external sacrificial cult but the type of sacrifice is not indicated. 'Incense' or 'sacrifice of incense' is a generic term. The word 'offering' (*minha*) is also generic. The same word is used of the sacrifice of Abel (Gen 4,4) and of Levitical sacrifice in general, whether bloody or unbloody (Is 1,13; 1 Chr 16,21). Before the Exile, '*minha*' is applied to all sacrifices, after the Exile usually to unbloody sacrifices.

This sacrifice certainly refers to the messianic era. It is to be universal, both by reason of place and time ('from the rising of the sun') and people ('among the nations'); whereas the Mosaic Law prescribed a sacrifice to be offered in Jerusalem (Deut 12,1-16). Moreover, according to the law, Gentiles were barred from taking part in the sacrifice of Yahweh (Lev 20,24; Deut 7,5). This new sacrifice belongs to the messianic age, when cult will be universal in character (Mich 4,1-11; Is 2,2). At the time of the prophet no sacrifice was endowed with the qualities of purity and universality mentioned here. A merely internal sacrifice is also excluded, as the entire context speaks of a cultic, external sacrifice.

Consequently, Malachi announces a new type of sacrifice, which belongs to the messianic age. The Eucharist, pure and universal sacrifice, appears in the light of the NT as the fulfillment of this prophecy. Yet, this does not imply necessarily that the literal sense of the text is directly Eucharistic.

ii) Sacrifice of Melchisedek (Gen 14,18-20) Context: Melchisedek, King of Salem, comes forward to meet Abraham and his company who were returning from a military expedition. Melchisedek brings out bread and wine and blesses Abraham, who, in return, offers him a tithe of everything.

Text: Exegetically, there is almost certainly no connection between the offering of bread and wine and Melchisedek's priesthood. The Hebrew word used ('hosî') means simply to bring out, without any sacrificial connotation. It is simply a charitable act on the part of Melchisedek, offering food to Abraham and his companions; in return, Abraham offers him part of his booty.

This text is quoted and explained in Heb 7,1-6: Melchisedek is a type of Christ but the text is silent about any sacrifice offered by Melchisedek, and therefore no comparison is established between Melchisedek and Christ on the sacrificial level. Christ is certainly "a priest according to the order of Melchisedek" (Ps 110,4: this Ps. is messianic, cfr. Mt. 22, 43ff), but this does not imply that Melchisedek is Christ's Eucharistic type. This Eucharistic interpretation, fairly common among the Fathers, starts only in the 3rd cent with Cyprian and seems to have a very scanty foundation in the text itself. It is very likely that we know nothing of a 'sacrifice of Melchisedek' (Kilmartin).

#### **Types and Prophecies**

- 1) All the ritual practices had one danger inherent in them: one could neglect the sign value and cling to the rite; hence the prophetic warnings against such abuses. The prophets do not condemn the sacrifices as such, but only their misuse. Hos 2,5 and 4,13 warn against the practices of the Canaanites. Amos 5,25; Is 43,23 - it is not the multiplication of the victims that honours God. The subjective disposition is the important factor, without which no sacrifice can be pleasing to God (Am 4,4; Is 1,11-16). With special vigour, the prophets insisted on the need for personal interior commitment (Jer 6,20; Hos 6,6; Mich 6,6-8; Amos 5,21-25). Interior sacrifice is the essential element of the sacrifice (Ps 50,18ff).
- 2) In this context, and in view of the disillusionments occasioned by the ritualistic formalism of the people, the prophetic hopes for an eschatological renewal is well understood. Not only is a new covenant foretold, which will be realized in the eschatological future (Jer 31,31-34; Ez 37,26-27), and sealed by the *Ebed Yahweh* (Is 42,6), but the sacrificial system itself will be renewed. In the messianic age, a new and perfect oblation will be offered to Yahweh among the nations (Mal 1,11); likewise the common meal of a messianic feast will gather all peoples (Is 55,1-3). In the OT, these are the two main types of the Eucharistic mystery. The first foreshadows the Eucharist as a sacrifice, the other as a meal.

### **The New Testament Realisation of the Mystery of the Eucharist**

#### **A. The Literary and Oral Traditions**

The NT has preserved four accounts of the Last Supper: Mt 26,26-29; Mk 14,22-25; Lk 22,15-20; 1Cor 11,23-26. These agree in their main elements: all are archaic in character; all refer themselves to Christ's institution. Nevertheless their differences are also evident. Hence the questions: how are the various narratives related to each other? How can we, explain their similarities and differences? What kinds of documents are we really dealing with? Which comes closest to the original supper of the Lord?

The most ancient written account is 1Cor, written between 54 and 57. But this is no proof that it contains the oldest oral tradition. The tradition recorded in 1Cor is indeed very ancient. It was handed to the Corinthians in 51 (1Cor 11,23), but had been received by Paul himself at an earlier date, probably at Jerusalem in 36-37 or in Antioch in 40. However, even this early date is no guarantee that the tradition on which Paul's account is based is more ancient than that of the other accounts. Only internal criticism can decide.

All four accounts show signs of stylisation, and hence they differ. Stylisation here means liturgisation. That is to say that the four texts are liturgical texts, witnessing primarily to the way in which the Lord's Supper was being celebrated in various churches. The accounts of the institution are not reports made by the synoptics or Paul, of what happened at the last supper. Thus, it is through the records of the early liturgical celebrations only that we can ascend to the historical event of the last supper itself.

What are the criteria to indicate a lesser or more advanced state of liturgical evolution? In this regard, two important traits distinguish Lk and Paul from Mk and Mt.

- a) While in Mk and Mt, the two rites of bread and wine are joined together within the meal (Mt 26,26, Mk 14,22), in Lk and 1Cor, on the contrary, the two rites are separate, the meal taking place between the one and the other (Lk 22,20, 1Cor 11,25). Lk and 1Cor seem here to witness here to a more ancient liturgical practice. Their sequence is closer to the Lord's Supper than Mt and Mk. If in the two latter accounts the two blessings are joined together, the reason seems to be that the accounts have preserved only what was necessary to explain the Christian meaning of the supper, as based on Christ's institution.
- b) The commission given by Christ to the apostles to repeat the ritual is found in Lk for the bread (Lk 22,19) and in 1Cor for the bread and wine (11,24,25). And it is absent in Mt and Mk. This too seems to indicate that the oral tradition on which Lk and Paul are based is anterior to the other. The anamnesis formula must be presumed to go back to a commission given by Christ to the apostles at the last supper. It seems reasonable to think that while the earliest celebration made mention of this commission, at a later stage of liturgical celebration, it could be left out. Silence here indicates a well-established practice. The commission was taken for granted. Moreover, in Mt and Mk, there is more liturgical stylisation: beside the tendency towards a greater conciseness of expression, there is also a tendency towards symmetrical parallelism - this is my body, this is my blood (Mt 2,26-28; Mk 14,22-24).

Thus two traditions seem to emerge, both liturgical, though representing different stages of evolution: The Antiochian preserved by 1Cor and Lk and the Markan followed by Mt. The former seems anterior to the latter. Regarding the contact between the traditions, the opinions of the exegetes vary.

The greatest difficulty is that of the composition of Lk. Some say there is a double composition; 22:15-18 and 22:19-20. Of the two compositions of Lk, the first

presents the Lord's Supper as the historical consummation of the Jewish pasch; the other as the initiation of the Christian Eucharist. In both there is the mention of the "cup". Some others say that the "cup" in 22,15-18 is the first cup of the liturgical feast and the cup in 22,20 is the sacramental cup, the cup of blessing. Hence they argue that Lk's composition is at once the most complete and closest to the original supper of the Lord.

Independently of the divergent opinions, it can be said that the Antiochian tradition represented by Lk and 1Cor preserves a greater exactitude in the description of the Last Supper and manifests to a lesser degree the effects of liturgical influence. Moreover, in view of its Semitism, it seems to have been written in Jerusalem, before being used in the Hellenistic Antioch. In general, the Antioch-Palestinian account may be taken as a guideline. This however, need not mean that Mk and Mt have not in some instances preserved primitive forms older than the other tradition. Hence, each of the four accounts must be taken into consideration and both traditions must be co-related. Neither is free from liturgical stylisation; and both through their liturgical form lead back to Christ's institution. Christ at the Last Supper said more than what is recorded in any of the four accounts. Of His words, both liturgical traditions have preserved as much seemed necessary to convey the meaning of the new institution. The written forms however, are but stereotyped accounts of living liturgies.

#### **B. The Historical and Liturgical Setting**

The Lord's Supper took place undoubtedly in the context and in the atmosphere of the Paschal Feast. The paschal associations are clearly indicted in the institution narratives. Whether or not Christ's farewell meal coincided with the actual celebration of the paschal meal remains however a disputed question. The real difficulty concerning Christ's supper as a paschal celebration is not theological, but historical and chronological. Theologically it seems clear that Lk (22,15-18) interprets Christ's supper as, a paschal meal. His intention would seem to consist in showing that Christ's institution replaces the paschal feast of the old dispensation. On the historical plane, however, it is more difficult to show that the farewell meal of Christ coincided with the Jewish paschal celebration, the main objection being the apparent contradiction between the chronology of the synoptics and that of St. John. According to Mk 14,12, the Lord's Supper is understood to have taken place "on the first day of the unleavened bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed". Jn 18,28 supposes however that Christ's trial and death took place on the day when the Passover was to be eaten. Scholars dispute over this point.

The liturgical viewpoint: The Last Supper was a sacred meal in the context of the Jewish liturgy, and hence it necessarily takes up a paschal connotation. Of special significance is the fact that from the liturgical viewpoint, all the elements preserved in the institution narratives, however fragmentary, fall in line with the ritual of the Jewish paschal celebration. Christ's Eucharistic words correspond to the *berakah* pronounced over the unleavened bread and over the cup of blessing.

Within the framework of the Jewish liturgy, Jesus selects the unleavened bread and the third cup and so transforms them that they become the vehicles of his Eucharistic self-gift. Only the bread and wine are taken and not the bitter herbs and the lamb. Bread and wine are now more than part of the ritual of the Jewish Passover; they are an essential component of the Christian Eucharist. Jesus has transformed profoundly the religious meaning of the celebration and as a consequence, an entirely

new Christian ritual, a new sacramental memorial has been born out of the fertile womb of Judaism. Now the deliverance from Egypt recedes to the background and its place is taken by the death and resurrection of Jesus, sacramentally present in the new rite. The core of the celebration is radically changed, but the all-enveloping atmosphere of profound thanksgiving remains intact. The stream of joyous praise and gratitude remains untouched, but it is given a new orientation, a new finality, a new significance. Calvary has displaced exodus, the bread and wine are no longer simple material elements, but symbols that carry the real presence of the giver - Jesus. Thus the Christian Eucharist is born.

### C. Exegesis and Theology

#### a) Institution Narratives

Introduction: Yahweh had commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Passover as a memorial of their departure from Egypt, which was a prelude to the covenant sealed on Mt. Sinai in the "blood of the covenant". Similarly Christ commanded his disciples to celebrate the Christian Eucharist as a memorial of the new covenant sealed in his own blood. Christ's intention gave to the Last Supper the meaning of a Paschal Meal, at least symbolically and theologically. Indeed, Christ assumed the symbolic and theological significance of the Passover celebration, while giving it a new meaning in the context of his own mystery. The memorial of the new covenant was destined to involve God's people in the covenant-event more clearly than the ancient memorial. The paschal meal, commemorative of the new covenant, would, under the signs of Christ's body given for man and his blood shed for them represent in a new fashion the mystery of his sacrifice. This intention of Christ must be shown in the institution narratives. Hence we explain the meaning of the key concepts and then we will look into the biblical theology of the Eucharistic institution.

1) Praise and Thanks: Μ◆●□γοῦς•Ωκ (benedicere) and Μ◆ΜΩΣ□Η•♦•Ωκ (gratias agere) both refer to the *berakah* said by Christ over the bread and wine. Mk and Mt have preserved both Greek terms (Mk Vs. 23&24; Mt Vs. 26&27); 1Cor and Lk, only the second (1Cor v.24, Lk Vs. 17&19). Both translate the Hebrew *berakah* with its double connotation of "praise" and "thanks". Christ said the *berakoth* over the unleavened bread and the wine in the context of a paschal meal. The tone of this celebration was expected to be one of joy; the table companions were declining on couches to symbolize the possession of the promised land; the wine was prescribed as a joyful symbol of the covenant.

Only the realization that this was a farewell meal probably made clear at the beginning of the Supper, viz., in the *berakah* on the first cup and the *haggadah* which explained the meaning of the celebration (Cfr Lk 22:15-18) tempered the joyful atmosphere of the occasion. Yet the joyful liturgical setting was maintained. The *Hallel* was sung (Cfr Mk 14:26; Mt 26:30, referring to the second part of the *Hallel*). Besides the eschatological logion (and the new content of the eucharistic words), some gestures which Christ added to the ritual made the apostles realize the gravity of the occasion and the newness of the institution: thus the washing of the feet and the mandate of charity (Jn 13,2ff) replaced the ritual washing of the hands which customarily preceded the main part of the meal. The sacramental words over the bread correspond to the *berakah* over the unleavened bread with which the meal proper began. In the customary celebration, this *berakah* was a short one. As the Antiochian tradition testifies, the Eucharistic words over the wine were separated by the supper

from those over the bread. The former were pronounced at the beginning of the meal proper, the latter at the end. Thus the sacramental cup is the "cup of blessing" or the third cup. Traditionally the ritual accompanying the third cup was the most solemn. The president having got up from his couch and raising the cup, pronounced various *berakoth*. Christ inserted the new institution of his body and blood in the double proclamation of divine praise over the unleavened bread and the cup of blessing.

2) Body and Blood:

a) All four accounts have the term  $\text{♦♦ΟΩ}$  for body and  $\text{ΩΗΟΩ}$  for blood. The Aramaic original for body seems to have been *bisra* (*basar* in Hebrew). Some exegetes are of the opinion that the original form in Greek is  $\text{♦Ω□☒}$  (flesh), as is preserved by Jn 6:54..., rather than  $\text{♦♦ΟΩ}$  (body). The former would render more exactly the Hebrew *basar*;  $\text{♦♦ΟΩ}$  would have been introduced in Hellenistic Churches for the sake of adaptation to the Greek mentality and so as to avoid the impression of crudeness regarding the institution. Others on the contrary consider  $\text{♦♦ΟΩ}$  as the more likely Greek rendering; it would express more faithfully the Hebrew idea of the human person conveyed by the term *basar*. Both translations of *basar* are found in LXX.

b) The binomial "body and blood" (*basar-dam*) (*soma-haima*). The parallelism between the two terms is clearer in the Markan tradition (this is my body // this is my blood) and less pronounced in the Antiochian tradition (this is my body // this cup is the new covenant in my blood). According to the Semitic anthropology, *basar/sark* does not stand for the body as a component element of man distinct from the soul; it rather means the whole person in his exterior manifestation and expression: the whole person in his corporeal existence. Man does not have a body; he is body, in so far as he communicates outwardly. To give one's body is to give oneself. Christ while speaking of his body refers to his whole person, to his life, which is given. Similarly for Christ's blood *Dam/haima* is the symbol of life par excellence (Lev 17:11; Dt 12:23). To give one's blood is to give one's life, to give oneself entirely. Thus the reference to Chris's blood can also have in view his whole human self. Jesus' use of the word blood at the Last Supper must be taken in a concrete sense as referring to himself in his totality as a living being, but with the emphasis on the living force within him.

3) Given and Poured out: Christ's total self oblation is further specified. According to the Antiochian tradition, Christ's body "is given for you" ( $\text{ΩΗΩ□Οℳ■□■}$  Lk 22,19, 1Cor 11,24 "is for you"). This connotation is absent in Markan tradition. However, Christ's gesture of breaking the bread, preserved by all four accounts, symbolizes that his whole life will be given. Similarly Christ's blood ( $\text{ΩΗΟΩ}$  can by itself indicate the blood that is shed), according to both traditions is poured out ( $\text{ℳ&ℳ♦■■□○ℳ■□■}$ ) (Mk 14, 24; Mt 26, 28; Lk 22, 20). Again, the present participle refers to the coming death. This reference is missing only in Paul. The symbolism of the cup must not be overlooked. The NT attaches to it the idea of suffering (Mt 10:38; Jn 18:12). The gesture of pouring the wine into the cup corresponds to that of the breaking of the bread, as a symbol of Christ's self gift. Thus Christ's giving of his body and pouring out of his blood are a binomial expression of the offering of his life, of his whole self. The literary reference, common to both the Antiochian and the Markan traditions is the *Ebed Yahweh*, mostly the 4th song (Is 53:10-12). The Markan tradition reproduces the "many" of Deutero Isaiah 53:11-12,

which in the OT implies a universalist, unlimited outlook; Lk's "for you" determines and concretises this universalist outlook in the liturgical use. Mt's more explicit version "for the forgiveness of sin" is also reminiscent of Is 53:12. Jesus characterizes his coming death as the voluntary oblation of a martyr. He depicts himself as the servant of Yahweh. His sacrifice is a person's total offering of self.

4) Blood and Covenant: In the institution narrative, Christ's blood is spoken of as "covenant blood", a connotation that necessarily implies the context of a ritual sacrifice. The *berakah* over the cup of blessing served as the occasion at which Christ explained the meaning of his paschal mystery as sacrifice of the new covenant. The offering of his life, symbolized in the pouring of his blood is ordained to seal the new covenant of God with men. The term οἵστιον & μία is found in all four accounts of the supper. οἵστιον & μία is so focal a word in the Eucharistic text that its interpretation is the key to interpreting the meaning of the supper and with it the meaning of Christianity. Christianity becomes a new relationship between God and man of which Christ is the essential realization and in which other men participate by sharing his body and blood. However, the Antiochian and Markan traditions differ both in their expression and in their literary source. The Antiochian tradition seems more archaic while the Markan manifests a more advanced liturgical stylisation and theological elaboration. According to the Antiochian tradition the "cup" represents the new covenant; this new covenant is sealed by Christ's pouring of his blood. The allusion here is directly to the "new covenant" of Jer 31:31-34, where the covenant is explicitly called a "new covenant". In the context of Christ's pouring of his blood as a martyr, there is also a reminiscence of the *Ebed Yahweh* appointed by God to be the covenant of the people (Is 42:6; 49:8). In the Markan tradition, the expression "this is my blood" is clearly parallel to "this is my body", but the "blood of the covenant" is used as a technical expression, which goes back to Ex 24:8. Direct allusion is made to the ritual "Communion-Sacrifice", by which the first covenant of Yahweh with his people had been sealed on Mt. Sinai (Ex 24:3-8). Both covenants are sealed in blood-rite. But while the first covenant was sealed in alien blood, the "new covenant-blood" is Christ's own: "this is my blood of the covenant" (*dam berithi*). Thus the Markan tradition describes Christ's death not simply as that of a martyr (the *ebed Yahweh*) who offers himself for all men, but in terms of a cultic sacrifice, which is not necessarily the case with allusions to the servant of Yahweh. Indeed, once the sacrificial interpretations is made clear by the reference to the "covenant-blood", it seems legitimate to find in the duality of the sign, flesh and blood, and in their separation, a symbol of the sacrificial character of Christ's death. Admittedly, Christ's sacramental words over the bread did not suffice to make this clear to the apostles, especially since the supper separated these words from the sacramental words over the wine (Cfr. Lk 19, 1Cor 25). The latter however, brought out the symbolism. The separation of the bread and wine signifies the separation of the body and blood, that is, death. Thus in retrospect, Christ's flesh is the flesh of a sacrificial victim, as his blood is sacrificial blood.

5) "This is my body" // "This is my blood": The four accounts have preserved the formula: "This is my body" (Mk 22; Mt 26; Lk 19; 1Cor 24). The Markan tradition has the parallel formula for the cup: "This is my blood" (Mk 24; Mt 28). The Greek copula is by itself, no sufficient proof as to the significance of the phrase, for the original Aramaic or Hebrew has no copula. As reconstituted by Jeremias, it reads: *den bisri den idhmi* (Aramaic) or *Zah Besari zeh dami* (Hebrew); "this my body",

"this my blood". (Cfr. The Eucharistic Words, pp. 220.). The more obvious and natural interpretation of these words, pronounced over bread and wine, is not the realistic but the symbolic; This represents, signifies my body, which is delivered up; this is the sign of my blood, which is shed. Furthermore, from the use of the present tense of the participles: **ὢχθομέμεθι** (which is given) (Lk 19) and **Ἄλλοι δέ πειράθησαν** (which is poured out) (Mk 24; Mt 28; Lk 20) little can be derived to sustain the affirmation that the body and blood are actually present. For the present tense can refer to an imminent (unavoidable) future. Here it refers to the forthcoming death on the cross.

However, the context of Christ's words leads to their realistic interpretation. The words and gestures over bread and wine constitute together a prophetic action (Jer 13:1-13; Ez 5:1-5). Such an action for a Semite does more than merely signify (II Kings 13:17-19). Christ's words were a prophetic figuration of his sacrifice, communicating its power in anticipation. The reference to the "blood of the covenant" is here decisive. "This is my 'blood of the covenant'" means that, by drinking his blood, the apostles are already entering into the new covenant relationship established in him; this they do as really and more so than the Hebrews partook of the Mosaic covenant by being sprinkled with the blood of the victim. The first covenant did not only signify, but also established a covenant relationship; so does a fortiori, the new covenant-blood, which is Christ's. The ritual of Mt. Sinai was a communion-sacrifice: only communion in the sacrificial victim itself, not in a mere symbol could make the Israelites share the covenant relationship sealed in it. Similarly, if communion in Christ's blood is to communicate a new covenant-relationship established in his sacrificial death, it is necessary that the sacrifice should be there and the blood of the victim really present so as to be shared actually. (1Cor 10:16; lit 27,29.) The sacramental blood is- the blood of a cultic sacrifice; the "real presence" of the body and the blood is bound up with the presence of the sacrifice and forms with it an organic unity.

6) Memorial and Proclamation: "Do this in view of my memorial" means "do this as a memorial of me". The memorial-formula is found only in the Antiochian tradition: in Lk only for the bread (Lk 19); in 1Cor for both the bread (24) and the cup (25). Its authenticity cannot however be doubted. What is new and unexpected in Christ's commission to the apostles is not the intimation to reiterate the celebration of the sacred meal; it is the content of the memorial and the new significance, which is attached to it.

"Do this" - where the present imperative indicates something to be done repeatedly- refers to Christ's various actions of taking bread, giving praise and thanks, breaking and sharing (Lk 19 more complete than 1Cor 24); Mk and Mt insist on Christ's intimation: Take (Mk 22) and eat (Mt 26). Similarly (Lk 20; 1Cor 25) for the cup, the commission to repeat Christ's way of acting bears on the various gestures: taking the cup, giving praise and thanks, sharing the cup (cfr. Mk 23; Mt 27). Mk and Mt insist on the fact that all partook of the same cup as was customary for the cup of blessing' of a paschal celebration; Mt adds the intimation to drink. The reference to Ex 24:8 in Mk and Mt makes it imperative to understand the precept to eat and drink as sharing in the victim of sacrifice. Christ innovates, however, in more than one way. He is the victim, whose body and blood are there present. Moreover, sharing in the victim does not consist only in eating its flesh (as in the OT sacrifices), but in

drinking its blood as well. In order to have part in the new covenant, the disciples must not only be sprinkled with the blood of the victim, they must drink the blood of the Lord.

The significance of the ritual celebration instituted by Christ is most clearly expressed by the term "memorial". It must be understood in the light of the theology of the memorial already implied in the liturgical celebration of the ancient covenant. The table-companions of the paschal meal partook personally of the covenantal event, which became present to them in a mysterious fashion. This however was a figure of the liturgical celebration of the new covenant. Under the signs of the bread and wine, Christ institutes a memorial of his sacrificial death; therefore the celebration of the new paschal meal implies sharing in the new covenant-event, mysteriously made present. The new Eucharistic institution will be representation of the paschal mystery by which the new covenant is sealed. In Christ's mind the liturgical anamnesis of his paschal mystery is not meant to be a mere subjective reminder, but an objective memorial. It is one and the other; if however it reminds men of God's decisive intervention in his Son, more deeply it puts them in contact with the mystery itself. It gives its true significance to Christ's institution, as it gave its true significance to the Jewish paschal meal. By instituting the sacred meal of his body and blood as Memorial, Christ inserts into it the reality of his covenant-sacrifice.

Hence the value of the sacred meal before God's own eyes. The celebration of the new Passover meal, as it were, serves as a reminder to God, of the mystery of his Son's sacrificial action through death and glorification. As an objective memorial, it contains the reality of the sacrifice of the new covenant established through Christ's death and glorification.

St. Paul further explains the meaning of the memorial (1Cor 25) as proclamation of the death of the Lord (1Cor 26). The proclamation of the paschal mystery in the Eucharistic celebration has the value of an event. At the last supper, Christ's action was a prophetic action ordained to a future deed; now its celebration is a commemorative action related to a past event. In both cases, however, the sacrifice contained in the paschal mystery is present. It was present then in anticipation; it is present now as memorial.

7. The eschatological logion: In Lk, the eschatological logion is found at the beginning of the narrative, in 15-18; in Mk and Mt at the end (Mk 25, Mt 29); St. Paul adds to his theological explanation of the meal as memorial a brief allusion to its eschatological significance (1Cor 26). Supposing one composition in Lk 22,15-20, it would seem that Lk has restored Christ's eschatological words to their exact place in the lord's supper, namely to the *berakah* over the first cup, or the *haggadah* that followed soon after. However, it may also be that Christ explained twice the eschatological significance of the celebration, since the normal development of the paschal meal offered two occasions to do so; at the beginning of the meal (*berakah* over the first cup and *haggadah*) and at the end (*berakah* with eschatological messianic perspective pronounced over the cup of blessing').

The exact meaning of the logion is not easy to determine. What is the 'kingdom of God' referred to in it? Does St. Paul's explanation coincide with that of the logion attributed to Jesus by the synoptics? What is the meaning of Jesus' avowal of abstinence? From Lk 16 there is no need to deduce that Christ fasted at the last supper and abstained from sharing the paschal meal with the apostles. On the other

hand, in spite of some patristic evidence to the contrary, it seems clear that Christ did not partake of the Eucharistic bread and cup, which he distributed to them. This seems clearly implied in the avowal of abstinence where the wine is concerned. That Christ did not share with his apostles in that which he was giving to them as his body and blood will have helped them to realize the newness of the institution.

How must the eschatological perspective of the logion be understood? In St. Paul's explanation of the logion, "until he comes" seems eschatological in the strict sense. St. Paul has in mind the final accomplishment of Christ's work in the eschatological banquet of the parousia and gives to the eucharistic celebration its eschatological dimension. The same is often taken for granted where the logion itself, as present in the synoptics, is concerned. Christ's avowal of abstinence from wine - wine is a symbol of the messianic goods; sharing in the cup evokes the covenant and its final realization - "until the kingdom of God comes" (Lk 18) is understood as an ardent prayer, a pressing supplication that the eschatological kingdom may come. While in Mk and Mt, the perspective of the logion is eschatological in the strict sense (opposing the eucharistic meal to the eschatological meal), in Lk, where it introduces the Lord's supper and opposes it to the old Jewish paschal rite, the perspective is primarily ecclesial. The kingdom of God in which Christ will share his blood is the Church.

Both perspectives must probably be considered, the Eucharistic feast being in this world an anticipation of the messianic banquet. What distinguishes the Christian eschatology from the Jewish is the tension between the "still to come" and the "already realized". The "kingdom of God" does coincide adequately with the *parousia*. It finds its first realization in the Church. Hence the ecclesial meaning of the logion. The perspective of an immediate future seems prevalent in the early interpretation as witnessed to by the Fathers and the liturgical documents. The Church's Eucharistic celebrations mark a first realization of Christ's eschatological perspectives. At the last Supper, Christ has directly in mind the immediate realization of the sacred commensality established in his blood. Jesus' avowal of abstinence indicates that the sacramental efficacy of the Eucharistic cup is entirely dependent on the paschal and Pentecostal event. The celebration of the Eucharistic mystery supposes the Church constituted in power by the effusion of the Church (Jn 7:39); conversely, the Eucharistic communion of the Church, even though oriented towards the future, already realizes in the present the sacred commensality of the eschatological banquet. The Church's Eucharistic meal links the great event that is past with the full redemption which is to come.

8) Synthesis: The institution narratives have a threefold OT background: the covenant blood of the Sinaitic communion-sacrifice (Ex 24:8), the oracle of Jer 31:31, concerning the new covenant, and the voluntary self oblation of the *Ebed Yahweh* (Is 53:11-12), appointed as covenant (Is 42:6; 49:8) for the people. The three converge to make the new Eucharistic institution the sacrificial meal of the new covenant, leading to the formation of the new people of God who press on their way to the heavenly banquet.

What did Christ do at the last supper? While his paschal mystery was drawing near, Christ made it present in anticipation under the signs of his body and of his blood, inserting the reality of his sacrifice into the ritual of the Passover meal. In the prefiguration of his mystery, he offered ritually his imminent sacrifice; for him the

last Supper meant a decisive and irrevocable commitment to the fulfilment of his sacrificial act. For the apostles, it meant sharing the body and blood of the victim in the scared banquet of the new Passover; thus they entered in anticipation into the new covenant relationship to be established through the paschal mystery. Christ - and he alone - offered; they - without him - partook of the divine victim. He offered himself to the Father in sacrifice and gave himself to the apostles as spiritual banquet. There is more; for Christ entrusted the sacrament of his sacrificial meal to the people of the new covenant to be celebrated as memorial. By this, he meant to perpetuate the presence of his mystery in the Church. By repeating Christ's gestures over bread and wine, God's new people must re-live his mystery and be united with it in a sacrificial banquet.

b). The Apostolic Celebration (The Apostolic Tradition)

1). In the Gospels, mostly in Lk, the apparitions of the risen Christ, are often accompanied by a meal. Such is the case in the episode of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35), in those of the apparitions in the upper room (Lk 24:36-43) and at the lake of Tiberius (Jn 21:9-13); Cfr also Mk 16:14 and Acts 1:4.

2). The celebrations of Christ's memorial by the Church presupposes the constitution of the Church in the power of the Spirit, a theme which precisely the Lucan narrative postpones till the 50th day after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:1). This however does not mean that the narratives mentioned above are devoid of all Eucharistic connotations. They mark the link between the Last Super of the historical Jesus and the Eucharist of the Church. Thus, Christ's *berakah* and breaking of the bread at Emmaus (Lk 24:30), though not a sacramental action, is, a symbol of the Eucharist.

3). The first traces of Eucharistic celebration in the apostolic Church are found in Acts 2:42,46; 20:7-11. The "breaking of the bread" refers to the rite which accompanied the *berakah* over the bread in Jewish celebration and which had been associated by Christ with the sacramental words. How the entire celebration came to be named after the fragmentary rite performed over the bread remains a matter of conjecture. Never, before its Christian usage did the expression designate an entire meal. That it refers to a Eucharistic celebration is certain where 1Cor 10:16 is concerned; it is more than probable for the passages of the Acts mentioned above judging from their liturgical context: the breaking of the bread is linked with the teachings of the apostles (*Didache*) and prayer (Acts 2:42). The Eucharistic celebration remains distinct from the synagogue liturgy still attended by Christians; it is practised in the houses (Acts 2:46).

The Markan tradition of the Last Supper, liturgical in its origins, indicates that at an early stage of liturgical elaboration the rituals of bread and wine had already been joined together (cf. Mk 14:26; Mt 26:26). At Corinth (1Cor 11:17..) it was preceded by an agape. Such was probably the custom in the other Churches as well. The frequency of the celebration had forced it out of the liturgical setting of the paschal meal: Acts 20:7 speaks of weekly celebration "on the first day of the week". At Corinth the whole procedure, agape and sacramental rite, was called the "Lord's Supper" (1Cor 11:20).

## c). Pauline Theology

1). The two major Eucharistic texts in St. Paul are 1 Cor 10:14-22 and 1Cor 11:17-34. The situation of the two texts in the epistle is the following: Paul answers various questions some of which are concerned with cultic meals of non-Christians. An observation on the proper ordering of the Christian liturgical assembly introduces remarks concerning the way in which the Eucharistic mystery is celebrated at Corinth. The foundation for Paul's reproaches is not that the Christians of Corinth consider the celebrations as an ordinary meal and the Eucharistic food as ordinary food. Rather, they fail to celebrate and to carry out worthily that which they believe. Their celebration is not in keeping with their faith; they fail to implement the concrete demands of Christ's institution. Paul explains that the sacrificial meal entrusted by Christ to his Church as a memorial brings with it concrete exigencies of communion. The exegesis and theology of the two texts are examined separately.

2). 1Cor 11: 17-34: The text is structured in three parts. First, the exposition of the case (17-22): the Eucharist is celebrated with separate factions (♦ΜΗ♦ΟΩ♦Ω) (18), separate groups (ΩΗΩΜ♦ΜΗΩ) (19)} this is in contradiction to the communal demands of the assembly (Μ&&ΩΜ♦Ω) (18). It shows lack of respect for the community (Μ&&ΩΜ♦Ω) (22). Paul in the second part recalls the tradition, which he has received and handed on to the Corinthians (23-25), the nature of the Lord's Supper condemns their practice. Their way of celebrating is a caricature; "it is not (Ω♦& Μ♦Ω) the Lord's supper that you are eating" (20). The third part is a *midrash* or moral application (26-34): because they fail to conform themselves to the mystery which they celebrate, the Corinthians are judged by it. To partake of it without discernment (ΩΗΩ&ΩΗΩ) is to drink and eat one's own condemnation (ΩΗΩ&ΩΗΩ) (29). Let each one examine himself (ΩΗΜ&ΩΗΩΟΜΩ) (31), testing himself (ΩΩ&ΩΗΩΟΩΜ♦Ω) (28), lest he should become the object of God's judgement (Μ&ΩΗΩΟΩΟΜΩΩ) (31), as many among them have become already (30)...

The point stressed here is that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the death of the Lord (26), as memorial (24,25); therefore (Φ♦♦Μ) it truly contains Christ's body and blood and cannot be treated lightly (27). It is a communal meal by which Christ's memorial is performed. Abuses are a sin both against the community and against the body and blood of Christ. To eat and drink "without discerning the body" (29) - 'body' stands here for the whole sacramental sign, as in the expression 'breaking the bread' – means without recognizing the eucharistic body in its specific claim to fraternal charity. The proclamation and memorial of the Lord imply his presence in the communal celebration; this in turn brings with it specific exigencies regarding the community. Noteworthy is the way in which Paul passes directly from the Last Supper of Christ with the apostles to that which the Church of Corinth celebrates (26); the sacramental food of the Corinthian celebration is identical with that which Christ himself distributed among his apostles; it is his body and his blood (23-25).

3). 1Cor10: 14-22. The Eucharist is presented as communion with the body and blood (♦♦ΩΩ - ΩΗΩΩ) of Christ, victim of sacrifice. This communion builds

up the Christian community into one whole, united with the risen Lord, who gives them 'one spirit to drink' (cfr 1Cor. 12,13). A clear parallelism is drawn between the table of the Lord and that of demons, between the cup of the Lord and that of demons (21). One is the Christian Eucharist; the other represents the idolatrous practices of the heathens (14). By implication there is on either side as there was in the communion sacrifices of Israel (18) an altar (□♦♦Ἀῳ♦♦ἌῳἈῳ) where a victim (□♦♦Ἀῳ) is offered in sacrifice (18); the altar is at the same time a table (♦ἌῳἌῳἌῳἌῳ) (21), where by partaking of the victim (□♦♦Ἀῳ) the worshippers are in "communion (ἌῳἈῳ♦Ἀῳ) with the altar" (18).

In virtue of the parallelism, the Christian Eucharist appears clearly as a sacrificial meal: Christ is offered on the altar; he is received at a table. "To drink the cup of the Lord" and "to share at the table of the Lord" are the two component elements of the sacred banquet attached to the sacrifice. Both establish the Christians in communion with the Lord. The sacramental cup is called "the cup of blessing that we bless"; literally: "the cup of the blessing" (*berakah*) which we say" (16). This expression links the sacramental cup with the "cup of blessing" of the old paschal meal, while expressing also its newness. Similarly, 'the bread that we break' (16) looks back to the old rite of the 'breaking of the bread': yet it is new. The newness of the double rite consists in this: it "is a communion" (ἢἌῳἈῳ♦Ἀῳ) with", that is to say, participation in the body and blood of Christ (16).

Thus by partaking of the sacramental body of Christ, we enter into communion with the risen body of the Lord. It is really quite clear that this body is first of all the individual body of the Lord, who died and rose again, with which we enter into communion by receiving the Eucharistic bread. As a consequence of our union with the risen body of the Lord we become one body among ourselves, thus the eucharistic communion with Christ is essentially ecclesial: it is together that Christians partake of the table of the Lord; their communal partaking of the Lord's table builds up the community. The Eucharist effects the unity of the Church. "Because the bread is one, we who are many are one body (♦ὉὭ), for we all partake of the one bread" (17); cfr Rom 12:5; 1Cor 12:13-14,27.

The Eucharistic mystery appears here clearly as a communal sacrificial banquet. It is a sacrifice, for a victim is offered on an altar; it is a banquet, for the victim is shared at a table. Here as in the institution narratives, the real presence of Christ's body and blood is implied in and postulated by the covenant making sacrificial meal to the Lord. Paul describes the Eucharistic food as the Lord's body and blood and not as signs of it. Paul makes it clear that the Lord's supper is not a new sacrifice (Rom 6: 9), it is Christ's one sacrifice so perpetuated and made present that the believers may communicate the divine victim.

#### d). Johannine Theology

1) St.John's Gospel has not preserved the institution narrative, even though five chapters (13-17) are concerned with the events of the Last Supper. On the other hand, Chapter 6 contains a long discourse on the "Bread of Life", which constitutes the major Eucharistic text of St.John. The sacramental symbolism of the fourth gospel must be kept in mind with its references to baptism and the Eucharist. The Eucharistic overtones of the Cana miracle (2:1- 11) are largely agreed upon in view of the

context: banquet, wine etc. Similarly the blood gushing from the pierced side of Christ visualised as already exalted (8:28; 12:32) on the cross symbolises the Eucharist (19:34) In 1Jn 5:6-8 the water and the blood refer to Christ's baptism and his death on the cross (He came by "water and by blood"). Thus the sacraments are linked with the whole Christ event. Christ's baptism inaugurates the public mission while death on the cross symbolises the entire paschal mystery.

2) Context and Composition: Ch 6 of the gospel is treated here after the institution narratives, even though it is traditionally interpreted as a promise of the Eucharist. This option requires an explanation, since it would seem to contradict the logical and chronological order. It has been observed that the institution narratives are liturgical texts used in the early churches; a process of induction is required to ascend from them to the original supper of the Lord. Likewise, the influence of the stylisation must be recognized in Jn 6.

3) Without entering into a detailed discussion of the historical context and the literary composition, the following may be said briefly as regards the Eucharistic significance of the text. It seems difficult to admit that at such an early stage of Christ's ministry as the feast of the Passover, which precedes the Passover of his death (6:4), the Eucharistic mystery could have been directly proposed to the Jews as the object of a fundamental option; on the other hand, the eucharistic realism of 6:51b-58 is beyond doubt. And many Eucharistic elements can be observed in the whole text (6:11; 6:23; 6:52b, 6:53-59). An influence of the Jewish Passover liturgy with its exodus-motif is also noticeable. St. John's discourse may in part have served as Christian Passover *haggadah*. The exodus motif is found mostly where the significance of the heavenly food is explained (6:26..), with reference to the significance of the manna.

4) In Jn 6 two themes are running parallel: the Word of God and the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood. Both are different forms of the "bread of life". And the Word and Eucharist are intimately and inseparably united and are simultaneously affirmed throughout the discourse, even though the stress passes progressively from the Word to the Eucharist.

5) In order to understand the "bread of life discourse", the particular way of John's gospel is to be kept in mind. Throughout, John's gospel is a "book of signs". Signs and words are essentially related. In John signs are not meant as extrinsic proof of Christ's credentials, but they introduce one to the mystery of his person. Thus Christ raised Lazarus in order to convey his own mystery as resurrection and life (11:25); he restored sight to the blind man in order to bring home the idea that he is the light of the world (9:5). Similarly in Jn 6 the miracle of the loaves (6:1-15) is meant by Christ as a sign of his mystery: "I am the bread of life" (6:35,48). The sign of the loaves is centred on Christ as King of the Messianic banquet.

6) The Plan and Structure of the "Bread of Life" Discourse: In its structure, 8 cycles can be distinguished (5&6 are the most important). The various cycles follow much the same progressive pattern, though not all the elements are in each cycle. The pattern of the cycle:

- » A mysterious declaration made by Christ (A)
- » Provokes misunderstanding and raises a question (B)

» The clarification of which and answer to which imply a further declaration and a further mystery (C)

First Cycle: (6:24-26) Two ways of seeking Christ: the correct way and the wrong way:

B. Christ's coming is an enigma (24-25)

C. Christ stigmatises the wrong way of seeking him (for material food), indicating that the authentic motif is to pierce through the sign to the mystery of his person (26)

Second Cycle: (27-29) Two kinds of works: the true and the false

A. Christ opposes the working for (seeking) two kinds of food, material and that of life eternal (27)

B. What work must we do? The Jewish understanding concerning the religious quest (28)

C. The true work is faith in the one sent by God (29)

Third Cycle (30-32) Two kinds of signs

B. They demand a sign (30-31) like the people before (Ex 3:13; 4:1-9) and during the exodus in the desert.

C. They have understood the OT materially: It is not Moses who gave the sign, but the Father. The Manna was but a figure of the "true bread from heaven" (32).

Fourth Cycle: (33-35) The true bread from heaven

A. It is that which God gives, which truly comes from heaven and gives life to the world (33)

B. Give us that bread always (34)

C. I am it (35a)

Fifth Cycle: (35-47) Jesus, bread of life (35a) comes down from heaven

A. Invitation to partake in the banquet of wisdom (35-40). Christ, identified with Wisdom, is sent by the Father. One must believe in him and come to him in order to have eternal life.

B. Murmuring, like the Jews in the desert against the manna which they no longer desire (41-42). The stumbling block is the incarnation.

C. Indirect answer (43-47). They do not believe for the lack of docility. They are not drawn by the Father, because they refuse his invitation. See the interior character of the new covenant (Jer 31:33).

Sixth Cycle: (48-58) Jesus bread of Life (48), given life to the world

A. From the bread of life through Christ to Christ-the-bread (48-51). Transition from word to sacrament, from believing to eating. The latter implies Christ's death (51c): his flesh given "for the life of the world".

B. Scandal: his flesh (♦∅□☒) connotes frailty and weakness: 1:14; 1Jn 4:2; 2Jn: 7) leading to life eternal (52)

C. Declaration and solution (53-58). The flesh and blood of the Son of Man (exalted and glorified: cfr. 62-63) is the source of life, if eaten and drunk (53-55). Life is derived from the one sent by the Father (56-58)

Seventh Cycle: (59-66) Scandal of the disciples

B. They are offended by Christ's words (59-60)

C. Paradoxical answer: Christ's weak flesh will ascend. In its state of weakness, it is powerless; glorified as belonging to the Son of Man, it will give life by the Spirit (61-63). What is a cause of scandal is also what brings the decisive light, provided the option of faith is made (64-66).

Eighth Cycle: (67-71) Option proposed to the twelve

B. Jesus' question: Do you want to go away too? (67)

C. You have the message of eternal life and we believe (68-69)

A. The passion is recalled to mind; one of the twelve will betray him (69-70). The sacrament of Christ's body and blood is essentially related to the paschal mystery.

## EXEGESIS AND THEOLOGY

7) Exegesis: Cycles 5 and 6 require close examination. Already from 6:32 onwards, the discourse turns into a *midrashic* commentary on the reference to the manna miracle in Ps 78:24, quoted in 6:31b. The *midrash* will find its climax in the sacramental realism of Vs. 52-58, where sacramental eating and drinking matches the realism of the heavenly bread. The manna was real food orientating the people towards the Word of God (Dt 8:2-3). The Word incarnate is God's decisive word to men. Communion with him culminates in the Eucharistic bread.

7) In Cycle 5, Christ's identification with the bread of life (35a) come down from heaven maintains primarily the perspective of the revealing incarnation of the Word of God. Cycle 6 takes a deeper orientation. Jesus is the bread of life (48), not merely as Incarnate Word, for he gives himself for the life of the world (51b). This gift of self takes the form of food, of flesh and blood to be eaten and drunk. These concepts give the discourse a definite sacramental orientation. Christ's flesh given "for (♦∅□ℳ□) the life of the world" (51b), in so far as it evokes 1Cor 11:24b and Lk 22:19b, connotes the personal oblation which he makes of himself in death as a martyr in fulfilment of the prophecy of the *Ebed Yahweh*. The flesh (♦∅□☒) found only in St. John, seems in the writer's mind, to refer primarily to the whole human self of the Word incarnate. The same concept ♦∅□☒ implies the frailty of his human condition in 1:14 (also 1Jn 4:2; 2Jn 7). In this context and in view of the Semitic usage, the binomial flesh-blood (♦∅□☒-∅ℳ○∅) too may refer to the gift, which the Word incarnate makes of his whole human self, not necessarily to the separated elements of a ritual sacrifice.

However, the drinking of the blood (51b) suggests the sacrificial cup of the institution narratives and presupposes a sacrificial immolation. The fact remains

nonetheless that for John the Eucharist is primarily the memorial of the redemptive incarnation. The redemptive incarnation tends to the Eucharist and finds in it its final implication and application. In this re-presentation of the redemptive incarnation, the meal aspect is stressed. The flesh and the blood are real food and drink (6:55); that the flesh must be eaten and the blood drunk is repeated three times (6:54,55,57). The sacramental realism is obvious: to eat Christ's flesh is to eat him (6:57). The effects of the Eucharistic banquet are brought out clearly: partaking of Christ's flesh and blood gives life everlasting (6:54); that is life in union with Christ (6:57), implying a personal presence and reciprocal indwelling (6:56), a decentration of self to be centred on Christ (6:57).

9) Synthesis: The Eucharistic text in St. John has a threefold reference: a) The exodus theme is found mostly in the typology of the manna (Jn 6:31,49,58; Cfr. Ex.16: 4..; Num9: 15) b) The parallelism between Moses (Ex 24:9..) and Christ (Jn 6:3) going up the mountain (compare Ex 16:12 and Jn 6:12). The reference to the past event of Exodus sets the Eucharist in the context of the history of salvation. c) The theme of the eschatological banquet (Is 25:6-8). It orients to the future and its realization is found mostly in the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. That of the banquet of Wisdom (Pro 9:1-6) inspires the formulas of the 5th cycle on the bread of life. John 6:35 joins together both themes of the eschatological meal and the banquet of Wisdom.

10) The following may be said as a summary of St. John's gospel regarding the Eucharist:

- a) The Eucharistic mystery in John is centred on the person of Jesus. Faith acknowledges in him God's manifestation in history through the incarnation of the Word.
- b) The redemptive death of the Incarnate Son is operative in his message (Word) and in the sacrament of his flesh and blood (Eucharist).
- c) The sacrament of his flesh and blood is considered as a banquet more explicitly than as sacrifice.
- d) The messianic banquet served by Christ has an eschatological dimension: the present life derived from it is the anticipated possession of life eternal, a pledge of eschatological resurrection.
- e) The eternal, life is Trinitarian in its structure: Christ's life-giving power comes from the Father (6:39-40; 6:57..); He possesses it through the Spirit (6:63). At the centre is the Christ-event.
- f) It is as "Son of Man" i.e., as glorified (6:62) and "spiritualised" (7:39; 16:7) that the Word Incarnate becomes the source of life.
- g) The Eucharist is the sacrament of the flesh and blood of the Son of Man (6:53). It emerges as a sacramental entity, which is dependent for its efficacy on the three major mysteries of Christ's life: Incarnation, Redemptive sacrifice, Resurrection-Ascension. It is the sacrament of the flesh and blood (Incarnation) of the Son of Man (Resurrection-Ascension) who offers himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of the world (redemptive sacrifice).

- h) The communal aspect of the Eucharist is not brought out in the discourse on the bread of life.
- i) The parable of the vine and the branches (Jn 15) and the prayer for unity intentionally recorded at the last supper (Jn 17:22..) indicate that the Eucharist is the sign par excellence which effects the union of all people in Christ.
- j) Rather than a mere "promise" of the Eucharist, the discourse on the bread of life is in some respects the climax of the NT revelation concerning the Eucharistic mystery. In St. John, the sacrificial aspect is less clearly brought out. On the other hand, the discourse on the bread of life shows best the realism of the sacred banquet and the effects of sacramental communion.

### **The Eucharistic Mystery in Tradition**

1) The apostolic Church understood and celebrated the Eucharistic mystery as a communal sacrificial meal, continuing the memorial of Christ's Paschal Mystery under the sacramental sign of his body and blood. They linked directly their celebration of the Christian Passover to the institution of Christ at the, last supper. Granted the difference in emphasis between the various documents, the stress in the apostolic church as a whole is laid on the Lord's banquet or meal; the mystery has preserved the "Lord's Supper".

2) The liturgical documents of the apostolic church witness to a first evolution in the manner of celebration: the two sacramental actions over bread and wine seem to be joined together, at the end of a Christian agape. At this stage Christians still attended the synagogue liturgy, while celebrating the Lord's Supper in the houses. Soon however, the synagogue liturgy of the Word of God becomes amalgamated with the Christian sacramental rite.

3) It is in the second century that the Eucharistic celebration was definitely separated from the fraternal agape, gradually evolving towards the form, which, in its main lines, will be common to all the liturgies. At the last supper Christ had performed 7 actions: He took bread, pronounced the *berakah* over it, broke it and distributed it; similarly he took the cup, pronounced the *berakah* over the wine, and again presented it to the apostles. All the Christian liturgies will telescope these 7 actions into 4 distinct rites; taking bread and wine and placing them on the altar (offertory); the combined *berakah* over bread and wine (eucharistic prayer); the breaking of the bread; and the sharing of the body and blood of Christ (communion rite). These four rites together make up the Eucharistic liturgy proper. The liturgy of the Word, which precedes, goes back to the Jewish synagogue liturgy. Though of distinct origin, the liturgy of the Word and Eucharistic liturgy become in the Christian celebration intimately united.

4) The various aspects of the Eucharistic mystery, sacrificial, communal, ecclesial, are reflected in the names which the earliest tradition gives to its celebration. The biblical names put in evidence the meal aspect and the co-union dimension. Christians meet at the table of the Lord (1Cor 10:21), to celebrate the Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:20); thus they break the bread together (Acts 2:42,46). The term Eucharist was soon destined to designate the celebration itself.

5) Now we have to look into the growing awareness of the Church concerning the content of the Eucharistic mystery. For this purpose, we have to consider both the liturgical practice and theological reflection of the centuries of Christian tradition. Then we will come to understand that the history of the Eucharist is to a great extent, the history of the fluctuations in emphasis in its various aspects as communal sacrificial meal.

#### A. The Patristic Period

Introduction: The primary sources of this period are the various Eucharistic prayers used for the liturgical celebration in the churches, both eastern and western. However, in the first two centuries, the liturgical formularies are not fixed. No formulary of a Eucharistic prayer is found before that of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus. The early documents of the post-apostolic times and of the second century must therefore be studied. The great liturgies, beginning with the third century will also be considered, which will be followed by the theological reflection of the Fathers of the classical period.

**1) The Early Documents:** a) The *Didache*: First non-biblical record of a Eucharistic celebration (50-70 AD?): Though some argue that the work is contemporaneous with, the apostolic writings, the influence of the books of the NT seems to be only indirect. The *Didache* has a "Eucharistic Prayer", which is very archaic in connotation. Here follows the text of the prayer:

*Didache* 9:1 With regard to the Eucharist, give thanks in this manner: 2. First for the cup "We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. Glory be yours through all ages". 3. Then for the bread broken: "We thank you our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. Glory be yours through all ages. 4. Just as the bread broken was first scattered on the hills, then was gathered and become one, so let your church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory and power through Jesus Christ, for all ages. 5. Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptized in the name of the Lord. For it is of this that the Lord was speaking when he said "do not give what is holy to the dogs".

10:1 When your hunger has been satisfied give thanks thus: 2: "We thank you Holy Father, for your holy name, which you have made to dwell in your hearts and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. Glory be yours through all ages! 3: All-powerful master, you created all things for your name's sake, and you have given food and drink to the children of men for their enjoyment, so that we may thank you. On us moreover, you have graciously bestowed a spiritual food and drink that lead to eternal life, through Jesus your servant. 4. Above all we thank you because you are almighty. Glory be yours through all ages. 5. Lord, remember your church and deliver it from all evil; make it perfect in your love and gather it from the four winds, this sanctified church into the kingdom you have prepared for it, for power and glory are yours through all ages! 6. May grace come and this world pass away! Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy, let him come! If anyone is not, let him repent! *Marana tha!* Amen. 7. Let the prophets give thanks for as long as they wish.

Comments: >1< The composition of *Didache* can be placed between the years 50-70. >2< For a long time there was the discussion whether this prayer may be seen as a eucharistic prayer in the strict sense. The difficulty was the absence of the institution narrative. There was also the question whether the chapters 9 and 10 may be connected with chapter 14. Some argued that ch. 9-10 refer to the religious meals

and 14 to the Sunday Eucharistic celebration. >3< The prayer is said to be Eucharistic in the sense of the Jewish liturgy: It gives praise and thanks (*berakah*) to God for the salvation of his people, which he wrought through his child/servant Jesus. >4< Recognizable are also elements that constituted the Christian Eucharistic celebration at the early stage when it was very close to the Jewish liturgy. The first cup (9:2) is followed by the double sacramental rite over bread (9:3) and wine (10:1..). The traditional *berakoth* are found in their natural order, the rite over the cup of blessing being accompanied with three distinct *berakoth*. >5< The Christian character of the Eucharistic prayer is marked by the repeated reference to "Jesus Christ your child (servant)". The newness brought about by Jesus is most apparent in 10:3: "On us moreover, you have graciously bestowed a spiritual food and drink that lead to eternal life, through Jesus your servant". "Your servant Jesus" is a very old title, which can be found in Acts 13:13-26 and 4:27-30. >6< The formula with which the text ends in 10:6b is not a formula of dismissal addressed to the non-competent, rather, it is an invitation to sacramental communion directed to the competent. >7< No explicit mention is made of the memorial either of the death-resurrection of Christ or of the new covenant sealed in his blood. The prayer is centred on spiritual food and drink given by God through his Servant Jesus. These are described in terms, which remain very close to St. John's gospel. >8< The Eucharistic gathering up of the Church (9:4) is underlined both for the present time (9:4) and in an eschatological perspective - marana tha - (10:5). >9< Didache 14 makes clear mention of the Sunday Eucharistic celebration:

Didache 14:1 On the dominical day of the Lord, come together to break bread and give thanks, after having, in addition, confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. But let anyone who is at odds with his fellow, not join with you until he has first been reconciled, lest your sacrifice be profaned. For here is what the Lord says: "In every place and at all times, let them offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.

>10< The sacrificial, communal, and ecclesial aspects of the Eucharistic mystery are all brought out in this text, which explains the demands of fraternal charity made by the nature of the Eucharist on the members of the community. >11< Here, for the first time, Mal 1:11 is seen as type of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

b) St. Ignatius of Antioch: The Eucharist in the Mystery of the Church: (107 A.D). Ignatius provides us with the first explicit testimony of the role of the bishop who presides over the Eucharist. One of the central themes of the letters of Ignatius is that of unity and concord. This theme is emphasized with much insistence in the Eucharistic texts. The unity of the Eucharistic celebration must reflect the unity of the Church, which is one as the flesh of the Lord is one: "Take care then to partake of one Eucharist, for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with his blood, and one the altar as there is one bishop with the college of priests and deacons my fellow servants. Thus you will conform in all your actions to the will of God" (Ad Philad, 4:1)

Indeed, unity is not merely symbolized by the Eucharist; it is efficaciously realized in its communal celebration, which ought to be frequent: "when you assemble together frequently, the powers of Satan are overthrown and his work of destruction are vanquished by the concord of your faith" (Ad Ephes. 13:2). To "break one and the same bread" in perfect harmony is to share together the "medicine of immortality, the

antidote against death so as to live in Christ for ever" (Ad Eph 22:2). The Eucharist has power to give life, because it is the flesh (♦□☒) of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father in his loving kindness raised from the dead. Christ's flesh is a God-given bread, his blood, and "love incorruptible". Thus the Christological and ecclesial aspects of the Eucharist are intimately united. Communion in Christ's body implies ecclesial communion. According to Ignatius, the Church must be one as the Lord himself is one. The unity of the Church is realized by the communal celebration of the Eucharistic mystery. As the centre of unity of the celebration, the bishop is also a symbol of the cohesion, which binds the community. So he says: "Where the Bishop appears, there let the people be; just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church".

- c) St. Justin: The Eucharist confronted with the heathen and the Jews (150-160):
- 1) St. Justin confronts the Christian faith with both paganism and Judaism. He has two works of importance in this regard: The Apology addressed to the heathen in which Justin states the facts about the Eucharist soberly and the Dialogue with Trypho, directed to the Jews, in which he shows how the mystery of the Eucharist fulfils the prophecies and outdoes the aspirations of the OT.
- 2. In the First Apology, chapters 65-66 describe summarily the Eucharistic celebration, which is said to follow after the conferring of baptism. The liturgy presented in ch. 67 is a Sunday liturgy. If both fragmentary descriptions are joined together, a rather complete picture of a typical 2nd century Eucharistic assembly can be obtained.
- 3. This is the order of the celebration: readings both from the OT and NT, followed by the homily; common prayer and pax; offertory rite which consists in bringing bread and a cup of wine with water to the president. There follows the Eucharistic prayer said by the president "as well as he can" or "according to his ability", that means, no standard formulary is provided. It is of course expected to develop the theme of the history of salvation after the pattern of the Hebrew *berakah*. It ends with the acclamation "Amen" by the people. Then the "bread and wine over which the Eucharist has been said" are distributed to those who are present and carried away to the absent. A sharing of goods in common is mentioned as a natural implication of the Eucharistic feast.
- 4. The celebration is a communal sacrificial meal. The eucharistic prayer contains a sacrificial act: In 67:2 we read in all that we offer we give thanks to the creator of all things through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.
- 5. The liturgical assembly takes place on the Sun-day, "because it is the first day, the day when God transformed matter and darkness and created the world, and also because it on this same day that Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead" (67:7).
- 6. The food shared at the sacred banquet is called "Eucharist". Thus from the eucharistic prayer and the liturgical celebration which contains it, the term

passes over to the bread and wine sanctified by the Eucharist pronounced over them.

7. The Eucharistic bread is related to the Logos. A parallelism is drawn between the Eucharist and incarnation, where the realism of Christ's presence in the food of the eucharistic banquet is clearly brought out: "Through the Word (Logos) of God, Jesus Christ our Saviour, becoming incarnate, took flesh (♦ΘΩΣ) and blood (ΩΗΟΩ) for our salvation: in the same way, the food, which, due to the prayer formed out of the word (logos) of Christ, has become Eucharist upon which we who are blood and flesh are fed and by which we are transformed - is the flesh (♦ΘΩΣ) and the blood (ΩΗΟΩ) of the incarnate Jesus. This is the doctrine that we have received". (66:2)
8. The Dialogue with Trypho sees in the Eucharistic mystery the realization of the prophecy of Mal 1:11. Hence we see an insistence on the sacrificial aspect; the Eucharist over the bread and wine is the sacrifice foretold by the prophets; Christians "offer" it "in every place"; no other sacrifice is pleasing to God. Justin also insists on the memorial contained in the mystery. The Eucharist is a sacrifice precisely as memorial. It is the memorial, not merely of the passion (paschal mystery), but of the whole Christ-event, including incarnation. Christ has taught us "to offer bread as memorial of the incarnation by which He became subject to suffering and the cup to make the memorial of his blood" in thanksgiving. Thus Justin stresses the realism of the Eucharistic food and the transforming power, which the Logos gives it; and he considers the Christian celebration as the one true sacrifice agreeable to God, and as the Eucharistic memorial of the redemptive incarnation and sacrificial action of the Son of God.

d) St. Iraneus: The Eucharist confronted with the false gnosis (180-190 AD): Against the Gnostic tendency to consider matter as evil, Iraneus unites in one and the same perspective the created world, man's body and the body of the risen Christ. The Eucharist here is considered as the "first fruits of creation", offered to God in sacrifice, in which at the same time the Logos is at work on our own earthly level and through which he shares with our own bodies his incorruptibility. The Eucharistic sacrificial meal has a cosmic dimension. Thus Christ took bread and wine "from the creation to which we belong"; these elements, "the first fruits of his own created things", he declared to be his body and blood. It is this offering that the Church has received from the apostles and which she now offers throughout the world to God - to him who gives us our very food as the first fruits of the gifts he makes to us under the covenant". The Jews no longer offer sacrifice; the Gnostic heretics cannot offer. For, how could they claim that the Eucharistic bread is the body of the Lord and the cup his blood, since they deny that he is the Son of the world's creator and his Word? Nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, our flesh receives life and incorruptibility: "Just as the bread produced from the earth is no longer ordinary bread after it has received the invocation (epiclesis) of God, but is the Eucharist - made up of two realities one earthly and the other heavenly - in the same way our bodies are no longer corruptible after they have received the Eucharist, but now possess the hope of resurrection. Nowhere in the early Christian tradition is the sacramental realism of the Eucharist so deeply rooted in earthly reality as in the works of Iraneus.

Between the cosmos and the realm of the Spirit there is no break of continuity. In the Eucharistic elements we come in contact with the glorified flesh of the Incarnate Logos. By sharing in his own immortality, we are introduced into the economy of God's self-communication.

## 2) The Great Eucharistic Prayers

The core of the Eucharistic celebration is the Eucharistic prayer. There lies in tradition the primary and principle source concerning the leaning of the Eucharistic mystery. While at the last supper, Christ had inserted the mystery of his body and blood into two complementary rites, separated by a meal, each accompanied with its own *berakah*, the Church soon joined into one complex rite, the "double consecration", which it inserted into one long *berakah* forming one uniform composition. At the last supper, the institution was split into two parts, each taking the liturgical form of a prayer of praise and thanksgiving; now a protracted prayer of praise and thanksgiving contains and envelops the whole institution. This forms one unit, expressing one mystery of salvation. Such is the origin of the Eucharistic prayer. This form of celebration is found as early as in St. Justin, even though, no text for the Eucharistic prayer is given in the First Apology. From the phase of personal improvisation to the fixation of the liturgical formularies, the evolution was gradual. The first undisputed text for the Eucharistic prayer is found in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus. Its formulary remains partly fluid. The great period of liturgical composition coincides with the golden age of the Fathers: from the middle of the fourth century to the middle of the 6th century.

a). The Apostolic Tradition: The Anaphora of Hippolytus: This Eucharistic prayer goes back to c. 225. The prayer may be regarded as originating in Rome, but it may not necessarily correspond to the practice in the Roman Church. The author presents it as a composition based on tradition. This Eucharistic prayer must have been composed in Greek. But it has come down to us only in translations, in two Coptic dialects, in Arabic and Ethiopian, and, for parts of the texts in Latin, and these have made it possible to reconstruct the original text. The text of the Anaphora follows:

_ The Lord be with you:	_ And also with you
_ Lift up your hearts:	_ They are turned to the Lord
_ Let us give thanks to the Lord	_ It is right and just

We give you thanks O God, through your beloved Child Jesus Christ, whom you have sent us in these last days as Saviour, Redeemer and Messenger of your will. He is your Word, inseparable from you, through whom you have created everything and whom, in your good pleasure, you sent from heaven into the womb of a virgin. He was conceived and became flesh; he manifested himself as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin. He did your will and to win for you a holy people, he stretched out his hands in suffering to rescue from suffering those who believe in you. When he was about to surrender himself to voluntary suffering in order to destroy death, to break the devil's chains, to tread hell underfoot, to pour out his light upon the just, to establish the rule of faith and manifest his resurrection, he took bread he gave you thank and said:

"Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you".

In like manner for the cup he said:

"This is my blood which is poured out for you.

When you do this, do it in memory of me."

Remembering therefore your death and your resurrection, we offer you the bread and wine; we thank you for having judged us worthy to stand before you and serve you as priests.

And we pray you to send your Holy Spirit on the offering of your holy church. Gather all those who share in your holy mysteries and grant that by this sharing they may be filled with the Holy Spirit who strengthens their faith in the truth.

May we be able thus to praise and glorify you through your Child Jesus Christ. Through him glory to you and honour, to the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, now and forever and ever! Amen.

Apart from the absence of the Sanctus and the intercessions, the overall structure of this prayer is familiar to us and we distinguish its following parts of the anaphora as follows:

i) Introductory dialogue

ii) Expression of Thanksgiving or prayer of praise and thanksgiving. In which the whole Christ-event from the incarnation to the paschal mystery is proclaimed as the culmination of the history of salvation. The formulation is clearly Christological. Every point that is mentioned is given as a motive for thanksgiving; the same theme re-emerges in the anamnesis and is implicit in the final doxology. Thus, the entire prayer is "eucharistic".

iii) Account of Institution; The commemoration of the Supper is made part of the ongoing prayer, which at every point is addressed to the Father. The commemoration is limited to the essentials.

iv) Anamnesis and Offering: In this Christ's death and resurrection are united and presented as sacrificial and Eucharistic.

v) Epiclesis: invocation of the fruits of the sacrifice upon the communicants, the main fruit being the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. The ecclesial meaning of the epiclesis is developed.

vi) Doxology: The final words of the prayer revive the theme of thanksgiving to the Father through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

vii) Amen: This is the response of the congregation.

Some observations: ◊ Here is found the oldest testimony concerning the introductory dialogue. ◊ The Christology is archaic: Christ is called "messenger" and "Child" after the fashion of Jewish Christianity. ◊ The anamnesis is conceived as sacrificial memorial, ordained to gather the Church before God and at his service. ◊ The epiclesis, where the allusion of the Spirit occurs, seems to be a later addition, though very ancient. ◊ The epiclesis does not pray for the consecration of the Eucharistic elements or even that the sacrifice may be accepted by God; it merely calls upon God to send His Spirit, so that the eucharistic celebration may benefit the Church by uniting her members.

On the other hand, a comprehensive survey points out and emphasizes strongly that the Oriental liturgies offer copious testimonies of the sacrificial nature of

the Eucharist. For instance, the East Syrian liturgy of Addai and Mari has the following prayer: "O God.... sanctify this sacrifice and grant through it the possibility that you may forget our many sins and be propitious . . . and grant that they may be worthy to obtain the forgiveness of their sins through this holy body which they receive in faith." Similarly the Apostolic Constitutions, also from Syria: "Send down upon this sacrifice thine Holy Spirit...that he may show this bread to be the body of Christ and the cup to be the blood of Christ, that those who are partakers thereof . . . may obtain the remission of their sins."

The Jerusalem liturgy of St James is no different: "Lord... your humble and unworthy servants...offer you this awesome and unbloody sacrifice for our sins"; then the request is made that the Lord may accept the offerings "sanctified by the Holy Spirit as the propitiation for our sins." It is this Jerusalem liturgy that establishes an explicit parallelism between the Eucharistic celebration and the blood-sprinkling ritual of the Jewish Kippur. The liturgy of St Basil is equally emphatic: "We plead and entreat your goodness . . . that this mystery that you have instituted for our salvation . . . may be unto forgiveness of sins and remission of our negligence".

## B. The Theology of the Church Fathers

The Fathers of the Church used three approaches: spiritualistic language, symbolic language and realistic language:

i) Spiritualistic Language: This way of speaking described the Eucharist as a spiritual feeding on the body and blood of Christ by faith. We find this kind of language already in 1Cor 10:3-4 and in the *Didache*. Among the Fathers of the Church we see Ambrose and Augustine using this spiritualistic language. Ambrose says:

In that sacrament is Christ, because it is the body of Christ. Therefore, it is not bodily food, but spiritual. Whence also the apostle says of the type of it that our fathers ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink. For the body of God is a spiritual body; the body of Christ is the body of a divine Spirit, because Christ is Spirit...

And Augustine says:

The body and blood of Christ will be life to each one if what is visibly received in the sacrament is spiritually eaten and drunk in very truth.

ii) Symbolic language: We find the symbolic mode of expression in Tertullian (+221):

The Lord called bread his body in order that you may understand him to have given the figure of his body to the bread... and having taken the bread and given to his disciples, he made it his body saying, "This is my body", that is, 'a figure of my body'.

Eusebius of Caesarea (+340) speaks of the bread as the symbol of his own body ... wine, which is the symbol of his blood. Cyril of Jerusalem says: *in the figure of bread is given to you the body and in the figure of wine is given to you the blood*.

Augustine says: *The supper, in which he committed and gave to his disciples the figure of his body and blood.*

iii) Realistic language: Very early in the patristic tradition, we find the realistic language. Such a close identification is seen between the sacramental signs and the reality that the bread and wine are said to be the body and blood of Christ. The reason for such language is the struggle against Docetism (the view that Jesus did not have a real body, but only appeared to have one) and Gnosticism (knowledge of reality to be attainable only by divine disclosure ≠ matter/evil). St. Ignatius of Antioch (+110) held that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Against Gnostics he says: *How can they say that the flesh yields to corruption, and does not partake of life, that flesh which had been fed on the body and blood of the Lord?* We read in Justin: ... *Just as Jesus Christ our Saviour was made flesh through the Word of God and took on flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, through the word of prayer... the food over which the Eucharist has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood.*

Summing up, we can say: In the patristic period, these three modes of expression were not opposing conceptions of the Eucharist, but complementary ways of speaking about it. The Fathers of the Church explained the meaning of the Eucharistic prayers in their catechetical and theological works. In general, the Fathers of the Church considered the Eucharist as the memorial of the paschal mystery. Around this fundamental idea, the various elements of the Eucharistic mystery find their organic unity. Christ's memorial contains the event of salvation. The realism of the liturgical anamnesis, while preserving the unicity of the historical mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, ensures its presence and efficacy within the Church. In the sacrificial banquet instituted by Christ, the event of salvation becomes sacramentally present to the Church.

#### **The Eucharistic Sacrifice:**

1) Historically the concept of "offering" has grown out of the "memorial". The concept is found as early as in Justin and it reaches its elaborate expression in St. Augustine. 2) At the beginning of the third century, both the Latins and the Greeks alike spoke of the Eucharistic mystery in terms of sacrificial terminology. According to Tertullian, the Eucharistic celebration is the "offering of the sacrifice" and according to Origen, the Eucharistic sacrifice replaces the propitiatory sacrifices of Israel. 3) It is Cyprian who developed a theory of the "Eucharistic sacrifice". According to him, Christ's offering consisted in the surrender of himself in his passion and death; it is also the object of our sacrificial offering: "The sacrifice which we offer is the passion of the Lord". The Eucharist thus sacramentally re-presents the oblation of Christ's passion, which the Saviour originally presented to the Father. Hence the Eucharistic celebration is in effect, the offering of Christ and of His Church, because in the oblation of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church is united with Christ.

4) Cyril of Jerusalem taught that the Eucharist is a "spiritual sacrifice" offered in an "unbloody manner". 5) St. John Chrysostom commenting on the uniqueness of the sacrifice of Christ, tells us that the Eucharist is the representation of Christ's sacrifice. It is the same Jesus Christ we offer always. The victim is always the same, so that the sacrifice is one. We do not each time offer different sacrifice, as did the high priest of old, but always the same one; or rather we perpetually accomplish the memorial of a unique sacrifice. Christ, who once for all offered himself to God, now gives himself to the Church to be offered by her. The Church's oblation is the

memorial and the re-presentation of Christ's. 6) According to Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Eucharist is the memorial of the one true sacrifice of Christ. It is the image and the representation of the eternal liturgy celebrated in the sanctuary of heaven by Christ the eternal high priest. 7) For St. Ambrose too the Eucharist is the earthly representation of Christ's eternal self-oblation in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus the priest's offering is con-joined with the perpetual intercession of the glorified Christ offering his death on behalf of us all.

8) Of all the Church Fathers, it is St. Augustine who offers the most elaborate formulation concerning the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharistic mystery. It is based on his theology of the sacraments. A sacrifice is made up of double elements, visible and invisible, ritual and spiritual. Normally the term 'sacrifice' applies to the outward sign of an interior disposition by which man seeks union with God: "the visible sacrifice is the sacrament, i.e., the sacred symbol of the invisible sacrifice". The inner disposition of the oblation remains the most important element, which gives the sacrifice "its truth". Hence, in some places Augustine would call "sacrifice" every action by which union with God is sought. The outward sign, sacrament of the interior sacrifice, is not however an empty sign; for the symbol is the thing symbolized itself in its outward expression and manifestation. Personal action and symbolic act are inseparable. Augustine applies this notion of sacrifice (as being an action at once interior and exterior) to Christ's paschal mystery. On Calvary, Christ offered himself unto death. This is the perfect sacrifice, fulfilling all the OT sacrifices. The visible sign of Christ's death is the perfect expression of the invisible sacrifice. In the Eucharist, Christians celebrate the memorial of Christ's sacrifice. This memorial is a sacrificial banquet in which Christ's body is offered and distributed to the participants. In this sacramental offering of His body and blood, Christ is the offerer and the oblation, the priest and the victim. At the same time, the Church is united with Christ's act of offering and together with Him becomes a victim of sacrifice offered to God. In what the Church offers, the Church itself is offered.

Conclusion: The sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic celebration is therefore to be found in the earliest strands of tradition and this tradition is practically universal. And this unanimity of the early Church carries considerable weight in the present ecumenical dialogue. "The whole Christian tradition when speaking of the Supper, makes use of sacrificial terminology... I find the NT terminology as well as the patristic unanimity too overwhelmingly in favour of the centrality of the sacrificial theme in a balanced Eucharistic Theology... Since the Eucharist is a sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ and a channel of the Church's sacrifice, it must also be interpreted in sacrificial categories". (J. von Allmen, Calvinist)

### C. Eucharist in the Middle Ages

1) The patristic period had attained unity and synthesis in the Eucharistic doctrine and practice. Sacrifice and meal were harmonized; the intimate connection between Eucharistic mystery and the mystery of the Church was keenly perceived; the sacramental presence of Christ was viewed in relation to the liturgical representation of the paschal mystery. Under the pressure of theological challenges, this beautiful harmony was disrupted and a clear perception of the unity of the doctrine was obscured. At the same time, the Eucharistic practice underwent deep transformation, but not all with a correct theological perspective. However, this does not mean that the post-patristic era produced only negative effects in the theology and practice of

Eucharist. From the viewpoint of doctrine, the controversies of the middle ages did result in a more precise enunciation of Christ's sacramental presence; though a one-sided insistence of the presence of Christ could lead to incomplete views. Similarly, the transformation of the Eucharistic practice, while it brought about a great increase in Eucharistic devotion, also had side effects by way of de-centration of the mystery. From the doctrinal viewpoint, the theological synthesis of St. Thomas may be considered as the most successful and positive; from the liturgical viewpoint, frequent celebration appears the most positive gain of the Middle Ages.

2) Among the three bodies of Christ, the physical, sacramental and the ecclesial, the first two, according to Augustine, pointed out the distinction between two periods of salvation-history: the Christ-event and the Church-era. As to the sacramental and ecclesial bodies of Christ, they were in Augustine's mind so correlated as to be absolutely inseparable. But in the middle ages, a new position came up as regards the sacramental ecclesial bodies of Christ. The mystery of Christ's sacramental presence is approached from a new angle. Much speculation centred on the question of the physical identity between the sacramental body and historical body; problems are raised in a way, which tends to overlook the sacramental nature of Christ's real presence in the sacrament. This new situation created new ways of speaking ordained to the defense of Christ's presence in the sacrament; the expression "mystical body" no longer referred to the sacramental body of Christ, but to his ecclesial body, the Church; as to the sacramental body, it is now called the "true body" (*verum corpus*) of Christ, with a view to insisting on the "reality" of this presence. Likewise, the term "communion" passes over from the Church-communion to the sacramental participation in Christ's body.

#### **D. The Teaching of the Church**

The present Catholic stress on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is to a very large extent the result of the anti-Protestant reaction that set in at the time of Luther and spread far and wide throughout Catholic Christendom. The time of Vatican II had not yet come. Serious theoretical distortions as well as incredible pastoral abuses had crept within the boundaries of the Church. It has rightly been said that polemics always produce very bad theology, and this applies to a large extent to that stormy period. Eventually Catholic doctrine crystallized in the dogmatic decrees of the Council of Trent, which are marked by sharpness and extreme clarity of expression as well as by a noticeably polemical, defensive attitude against the vicious Protestant onslaught. Trent too is a creature of history and a product of the times, an important landmark in the course of the Church's history, but only one landmark.

1. Luther's views on the Mass. His views on the subject are rather complex and certainly not so simple as some Catholic authors would make them to be. On the one hand:

a) He admits certain aspects of the Mass: "We should therefore give careful heed to this word sacrifice . . . We are to offer Him praise and. thanksgiving with our whole heart, for his unspeakable, sweet grace and. mercy, which He has promised and given in this sacrament.. To be sure, this sacrifice of prayer, praise and thanksgiving and. of ourselves as well, we are not to present before God in our own person. But we are to lay it upon Christ and let Him present it for us, as St Paul teaches us in Heb 13,15. We do not offer Christ as a sacrifice but Christ offers us. And. in this way it is permissible, yes, profitable, to call the Mass a sacrifice; not on its own account, but

because we offer ourselves as a sacrifice along with Christ. . If the Mass were so understood and for this reason, called a sacrifice, it would be well.

"Few, however, understand the Mass in this way. Therefore the Mass has been instituted that we may come together and offer such sacrifice in common. So it is that I also offer Christ, and that I desire and believe that He presents it to God in his own Person: and. in order to strengthen this faith of mine He has given me a token that He will do it. This token is the sacrament of "bread and wine". (From the 'Treatise on the NT', 1520).

These are his views in July 1520, a few months before his formal excommunication (Jan. 1521). The Mass would, be a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving but nothing is said about its propitiatory nature.

b) On the other hand, he rejects violently the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, and approximately at the same time. He considers the Mass to be a testament (in the juridical sense of last will) and. therefore not a sacrifice, for a sacrifice we offer, but a last will we receive. "Out of the sacrament and testament of God, which ought to be a good gift received, they (Catholics) have made for themselves a good deed performed, which then they give to others and offer up to God" (From 'The Babylonian Captivity', 1520).

c) As for the reasons for this rejection:

i) Catholic pastoral practice at that time: Luther reacts vehemently against the multiplication of Masses for the dead, against the silent Mass, against the Latin Mass, the private Mass, the 'buying' and. 'selling' of Masses and the abuses connected, with this practice. But deeper than this:

ii) Scriptural reason: The NT in general and the text of the Institution in particular do not call the Eucharist a. sacrifice and we should follow this scriptural testimony. Besides, the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist goes counter to Heb 10:10, according to which Christ offered only once, namely on the Cross. Therefore the sacrificial nature of the Mass would be derogatory to the true sacrifice of the Cross and to its absolute unicity.

iii) Theologically, the Mass can in no way "be called a sacrifice. For sacrifice is practically identifiable with propitiatory sacrifice and this in turn implies the reconciliation of an angry God by means of the Mass: "They (the papists) invent for themselves a false god of their own minds, a god who is angry and requires reconciling" (Works, 36,176), whereas in reality God is "always gracious and merciful" (Ibid.175). Hence both a narrow conception of sacrifice and a different conception of God lie behind his rejection of the Eucharistic sacrifice. For Luther, the Mass is God's gift to man, not man's gift to God.

2. Tridentine doctrine: The Council begins to discuss the question in 1551, after the 13th session on the RP. First the Protestant errors are collected:

i) "The Mass is not a sacrifice nor is it an offering for sin, but only a commemoration of the sacrifice of the Cross; it is called sacrifice by the Fathers only in the broad sense, but in reality it is not a sacrifice but only a testament and a promise for the remission of sin" (from Luther).

ii. "It is a blasphemy to the most holy sacrifice of Christ performed on the Cross, to believe that the Son of God is again offered to the Father by priests at the Mass; and to say that Christ is mystically offered and immolated for us, means nothing else than Christ is given to us to be eaten" (Luther)

All the theologians consider that these propositions should be condemned as heretical. The Council decides to grant the Protestant request that some of the Reformers be present at the deliberations as observers. For this reason the session is postponed and the Council adjourned sine die.

In 1562 the subject is taken up again. In this general sacrificial context the decisive issue is the sacrificial character of the last Supper, for on this will depend the sacrificial nature of the Mass. In the final decree the essential connection between the Cross and the Mass is established from a triple point of view:

- a) The Mass is the memorial of the Cross (but this is left undeveloped).
- b) The Mass applies the fruits of Calvary to the Church
- c) The Mass re-presents the sacrifice of the Cross (of CF 1546). This representation of Calvary in the Eucharist is further clarified by the double identity of priest and victim:

Identity of Priest: The priest in both the sacrifices (the Cross and the Mass) is the same, namely Christ. But the Council never says that the Mass is offered directly by Christ, but rather that it is offered "by the Church" (CF 1546) or "through the ministry of priests" (CF 1548); and to this extent the original Christic sacrifice becomes now ecclesial.

Identity of victim: This is more clearly and forcefully expressed. Christ was the victim on the Cross and He is now the victim "to be offered by the Church" (CF 1546); Christ "is offered now in an unbloody manner" (CF 1548). From this substantial identity of the victim both the propitiatory and the intercessory nature of the Mass are deduced (CF 1548).

The Protestant position is directly rejected in canons 1,3 and 4 (CF 1555, 1557, 1558).

Therefore only the following propositions are covered by the authority of the Council: i) There is an essential link between the Cross and the Mass on account of the double identity of offerer and victim. ii) The Mass commemorates, represents the Cross and applies its fruits. iii) The Supper has an essential reference to both the Cross and the Mass. The rest is left to the theologians to explain.

Against the reformers, the Council affirms the sacrificial value of the Mass and its propitiatory character. The Mass is "a true and proper sacrifice offered to God" (1555). The Council does not give a precise definition of sacrifice, though it supposes everywhere that a sacrifice implies an act of oblation. Preoccupied with meeting the difficulties of the reformers, the Council stresses the essential relatedness of the Mass to Christ's sacrifice, which remains unique and absolute. Hence in Chapter 1 (1546, 1547), there is a long development on the priesthood of Christ and his sacrifice, and further on, the meaning of the Last Supper as institution and commission given by Christ to the Church, to celebrate liturgically the memorial of his historical sacrifice; this liturgical commemoration is a sacrificial action. The sacrifice of Christ is unique,

perfect and complete. Henceforward, there can be no new sacrifice. All that remains possible is a sacramental oblation of the sacrifice once accomplished. Christ intended such a sacramental oblation, so that he might leave to his beloved spouse, the Church a visible sacrifice such as the nature of man requires. With this end in view, he instituted under the signs of bread and wine the sacrificial representation in which the memorial of the bloody sacrifice of the cross is celebrated.

Chapter II goes on to explain that in the sacrifice of the Mass "the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner" (1548). The essential relatedness of the sacrifice of the Mass to that of the cross, the identity and distinction between each, are marked here: the priest and the victim are the same; therefore the sacrifice remains one. On the other hand, while on the cross, Christ offered his sacrificial immolation by himself, he offers now through the priests the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. Both the sacrifices stand, but on an essentially different level: the cross, unique and supreme; the Mass under the cross and subordinate to it.

In a way one of the most peculiar characteristics of the Council of Trent was its strong insistence that besides being a sacrifice of praise, supplication, and thanksgiving, the Mass is also strictly a sacrifice of propitiation for the forgiveness of sins. Apparently from the very start the bishops gathered in council were convinced that the Mass is indeed a sacrifice of propitiation, and on this point they displayed a remarkably united front. The dissension arose in their ranks when they tried to produce a really convincing argument to support their contention. After a prolonged discussion they finally settled on one line of reasoning whose extreme simplicity compelled at the end general acceptance: the cross and the Mass are both propitiatory because both have the same victim, Christ. And so the identity of the victim decides the issue and brings the endless flow of episcopal eloquence to an end. Jesus died on the cross as a victim of propitiation for the sins of humankind and the very same victim is still offered on the Church's altars at the Eucharistic celebration. Hence, the sacrifice of the Mass is equally propitiatory, a sacrifice at which God "pardons wrong-doings and sins, even grave ones" (CF 1548).

The deficiencies in the final decree are the result of the faulty Christology on which it is based. Nothing is said about the resurrection and the acceptance of the victim of the Cross and consequently this essential aspect is also absent from the Council's treatment of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

#### **Aftermath of Trent in Catholic Theology**

The Council of Trent had been led by historical circumstances to put emphasis on the "real presence of Christ" under the Eucharistic species on the one hand and on the sacrificial value of the Mass on the other. While the doctrine of presence and sacrifice were elaborated, the Eucharistic meal received no treatment of its own. After Trent, catholic theology kept mostly to the approach adopted by the Council. The distinction between the "sacrament of the Eucharist" and the "sacrifice of the Mass" became classical. But there was no organic view of the Eucharistic mystery as a sacramental sacrificial meal. Theological explanations were now sought to account for the fact that the "real presence" of Christ on the altar is accompanied by a true

sacrificial action. Hence the many sacrificial theories which issued from post-Tridentine theology. We have two groups of theories: the immolation theories and the oblation theories.

a) Immolation theories: They consider the immolation of the victim as the essence of the sacrifice. Now the problem concerning the Mass as sacrifice is: what action takes place at the Mass, which can be understood as an immolation of the victim. Some looked for a physical change. Thus, for instance, the physical change undergone by the species is interpreted as destruction; or else, it is pointed out that the sacramental reality of Christ, realized by the consecration is "destroyed" in communion (Bellarmine). According to some others, Christ's Eucharistic presence puts him in a "state of abasement" equivalent to death. Others sought for a figure or symbol of Christ's immolation. The separation of the species, the fraction of the bread, the sacramental communion, are all at one time or another considered as figures of Christ's immolation. Double consecration also was considered as symbolic of immolation.

b) Oblation theories: Conscious of the artificial character of the immolation theories, more recent authors shift the essence of sacrifice from the immolation to the oblation. An act of oblation is therefore required and suffices to account for the sacrificial character of the Mass. This is open to various interpretations: i) the essence of sacrifice consists merely in the interior act of oblation: the Mass is a sacrifice simply because Christ's "eternal sacrifice" or lasting interior self-oblation is made present on the altar, ii) A ritual oblation, expressive of an interior disposition, is of the essence of the sacrifice. At the last supper, Christ offered ritually his forthcoming death; which thus acquired sacrificial character; now the Church offers ritually Christ made present under the species in his "state of victimhood". The last supper formed together with the cross a unique sacrifice; the Mass is sacrificial because it implies a ritual offering of Christ by the Church. Therefore, in so far as it is essentially related to the cross Last Supper, Calvary and the Mass are inseparable.

#### **Vatican II: Constitution on the Liturgy (1963)**

a) The Eucharist in general: There is a remarkable change of atmosphere with regard to Trent: now the Eucharist; is set in an almost; heavenly context and therefore Mass is no longer restricted to the aspect of Christ's death:

In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle (cf. Rev 21:2; Col 3:1; Heb 8:2); we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until he, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with him in glory (cf. Phil 3:20; Col 3:4) (SC 8)

b) Explicitly on the Mass. The Eucharistic sacrifice perpetuates the sacrifice of the Cross. Completing the conception of Pins XII, who had defined the Mass as the memorial of Christ's death, the Council defines it as "the memorial of Christ's death

and resurrection" (the full text in CF 1575). Hence the aspect of Christ's glorification, left out by Trent, is brought out explicitly.

#### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Christ's death and resurrection, is the decisive act, both interior and exterior, spiritual and concretely expressed, in which, renouncing all things, even his own human life, he dedicates himself, consecrates himself (Jn 17:19) entirely to the Father. Christ passes through the mystery of his death in a spirit of perfect dedication to his Father, and through his resurrection attains to perfect union with him. In so far as death, the wage of sin, implies a break in the nature of man, Christ accepts this supreme trial in a spirit of entire self-renunciation; in so far as death is the supreme act which sums up his entire human life, he posits it in a spirit total attachment to the Father. Thus his act of dying is the decisive expression of his will to be with God, the perfect exteriorisation of his sacrificial spirit. His glorious resurrection is the consummation, the realization of his search for union.

The sacrifice of Christ is the perfect sacrifice. Christ offers his sacrificial death, as the Word incarnate, head of the human race. He passes unto the Father as the representative of all people. In the mystery of his Passover, the end of sacrifice is, in principle already attained for the entire human race: humanity is re-united with God in the person of their representative. Man's redemption is accomplished through an efficacious and decisive sacrifice. The glory of Christ's risen humanity is for all people the reality of salvation.

Christ's sacrifice thus sums up and transcends all historical sacrifices offered by human beings to God. It accomplished in fact the union with God, which all other sacrifices sought without ever being able to establish it. As the one efficacious sacrifice, by which man's union with God is realized, it fulfils the religious aspirations, which have been expressed in all historical religions through the offering of sacrifices to God. Theologically, all historical sacrifices, Jewish and non-Jewish, must be understood in relation to the perfect sacrifice of Christ, in the mystery of his Passover to the Father as representative of all people.

Sacrifice, belongs to the realm of signs. It is an exterior act of cult, directed to express man's dedication and sacrificial disposition towards God. Two elements must therefore be distinguished in every sacrifice: the interior and the exterior, the sign and the signified. Of the two elements, which make up a true sacrificial action, the interior act, in a sense, is the most important, for the ritual offering is a lie if it does not express a personal act of oblation. Nonetheless, the interior act of self-oblation becomes strictly sacrificial in so far precisely as it is expressed and carried by a ritual offering. The cultic act of self-oblation is no empty sign; rather it is a symbolic action, in which the sacrificial disposition of the worshipper is contained and by which it is actuated. If the sacrifice is to take up its full meaning, the person's self-gift must be expressed sensibly.

Thus sacrifice is a gift offering made to God, through which man's self-offering finds a concrete ritual expression. The gift, which is made, is symbolic of the giver's dedication to God; similarly, the acceptance of the gift on God's part is symbolic of the gracious acceptance of the giver. The last and adequate end of every

sacrifice is union with God. In this search for union, the various ends of the sacrifice - to give praise and thanks to God, to adore him, to ask for his blessings and to seek his pardon - are implied.

The Council of Trent explains the meaning of the Last Supper as follows: "Christ offered up to God the Father his own body and blood under the form of bread and wine", "so that he might leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice", that "the bloody sacrifice once to be accomplished on the cross might be represented, the memorial thereof remain even to the end of the world", "that they (the apostles) might partake" of the memorial of his death and resurrection (CF 1546). Hence we can say: The Last Supper is not directed precisely to making Christ's death sacrificial: rather it is ordained to the sacramental re-presentation in the Church of one redemptive sacrifice. The intention of Christ in the institution of the Eucharist was to unite the Church sacramentally to the event of salvation. To this effect, the redemptive sacrifice to be accomplished once for all was made sacramentally present in the Lord's Supper. By repeating the rites instituted by Christ, the Church would have a sacrifice to offer to God "as the nature of man requires" (Trent); yet this sacrifice would be none other than the sacramental re-presentation of the unique redemptive sacrifice.

At the Last Supper Christ was thus assuming all the religious aspirations towards union with God expressed in the sacrifices of humanity, and he fulfilled them by entrusting the Church with the sacramental re-presentation of the, perfect and efficacious sacrifice. Already re-united with God through Christ's Passover, by which the new covenant of God with man has been sealed once for all, Church passes unto God in reality through the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice. For, in it, the Church is assumed into Christ's own Passover and the New Covenant becomes for the Church a concrete reality.

On the other hand, the identity of the Mass with the Last Supper must be stressed. In compliance with the commission received from Christ, the Church does precisely what Christ himself did at the Last Supper. If her liturgical celebration of the Eucharistic mystery contains the sacramental re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice, the reason is that Christ inserted it into the ritual, which he instituted and performed. Admittedly, Christ performed in advance the ritual of his sacrifice, while the Church celebrates the sacrifice already accomplished once for all. In the cenacle, the presentation took place by way of anticipation; the Church does it by way of memorial. Hence it is said: the Lord's Supper is the oblation of the victim to be immolated; the Mass is the oblation of the victim once immolated. In both cases however, the reality of the Paschal Mystery is contained under the sacramental signs. The Mass is exactly the act in which the Church re-lives the mystery of the first "Lord's Supper".

By passing through the mystery of his death and resurrection, Christ not only became for all the "source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9); he is also "living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him" (Heb 7:25). Therefore, in his glorious humanity, Christ - who now has reached beyond time - is fixed in a lasting act of self-oblation to the Father; better still, the disposition of self-oblation with which he passed through his Paschal Mystery once for all has become eternalised in him. The risen Christ is not simply a glorified victim of sacrifice; he offers himself eternally to the Father. It is clear that this continuing self-oblation involves on the part of Christ

no new action; much less does it suppose a repetition of the historical mystery. Rather, Christ's act of self-renunciation and attachment to God, expressed perfectly in the mystery of his Passover, has attained in his glory permanency and fixation. In his glory, Christ is united to God as turned towards him and offering himself to him. His union with the Father is the permanent seal imprinted on his self-oblation. In the eternal act of Christ's glorification, his death itself is actualised, for, the glorification of Christ is nothing else than the act of death in its radiant termination. The redemptive act, unique and permanent, the gift of himself through filial obedience to the Father for the salvation of the world is eternalised in the heart of the glorious Christ.

Thus Christ is, in his glory, the high priest of a heavenly liturgy. The Eucharistic sacrifice very precisely makes this heavenly liturgy sacramentally present to the Church. Becoming present as turned towards the Father in an enduring act of self-oblation, Christ draws the Church into the mystery of his own Passover. The Church is united with him in his act of self surrender to God; the Church's act of oblation being assumed into his own, the Church follows after Christ in his paschal mystery. Thus the mystery of the new covenant is actualised for the Church. Thus the Eucharistic mystery is directly the sacrament of the heavenly liturgy, which eternalises the mystery of Christ's Passover, not of the historical event of the paschal mystery itself. It is to be maintained that Christ does not merely give himself to the Church to offer but draws the Church sacramentally into his own lasting self-oblation. The Eucharistic sacrifice is a sacramental sacrifice in so far as it makes the heavenly liturgy of the glorious High Priest sacramentally present. Christ offers himself through the Church, drawing her and making her enter into his self-oblation.

By passing through the mystery of his death and resurrection, Christ has offered once for all a perfect and efficacious sacrifice. To this the Eucharistic sacrifice can add nothing by way of accomplishing men's redemption. What newness then does it bring about? It is accepted that the Eucharistic sacrifice is essentially related to the historical sacrifice of Christ, the absolute sacrifice. But the "how" of this relatedness is to be explained. We can say that the Eucharistic sacrifice directly re-presents the heavenly liturgy performed by the glorified Christ. Between the Paschal Mystery and the Eucharistic Mystery, the relation is one of historical event to sacramental representation; however, this re-presentation takes place through the mediation of the heavenly sacrifice offered by the Risen Lord. The Eucharistic sacrifice makes the historical sacrifice of Christ sacramentally present in so far as this endures in trans-historical form in the glorified humanity. Historical event and sacramental presence: such is the unity and distinction between the absolute sacrifice of Christ's Passover and the relative sacrifice of the Church's Eucharist. However, the sacramental representation of a sacrifice is not an independent sacrificial event; the representation differs from the event. The Mass is a sacrificial action as re-presentation of the sacrificial event of Christ's paschal mystery.

